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THE
REASONABLENESS OF RELIGION

IN ITS

Doctrines and Institutions,

WITH A PARTICULAR CONSIDERATION

OF

BELIEVERS' BAPTISM:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES;

AND

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

THE OPINIONS OF SIR ISAAC NEWTON, MR. WHISTON,
DR. JAMES FOSTER,

AND

A DEFENCE OF BELIEVERS' BAPTISM,

BY JOHN MILTON,

EXTRACTED FROM HIS TREATISE ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

BY BENJAMIN MARDON, M. A.

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“Through baptism we are initiated into the gospel, which is a reasonable, manly, and, in the highest sense, a free service.”—MILTON.

“Fiant Christiani cum Christum nosse potuerint.”—TERTULLIAN.

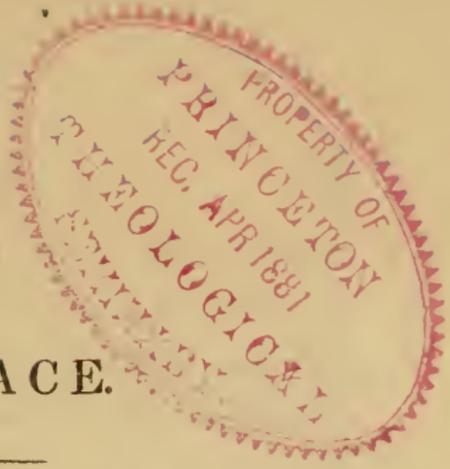
‘Ο πιεύσας και βαπτισθεις σωθήσεται’—THE GOSPEL.

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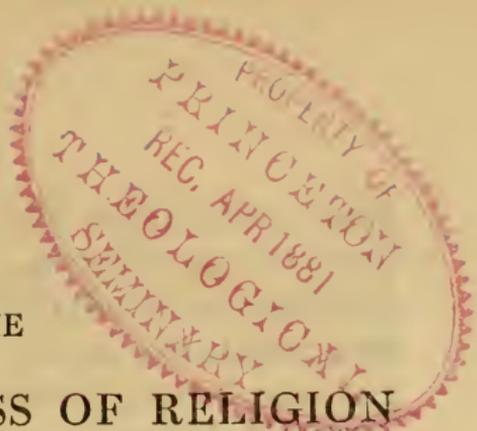


PREFACE.

IF any apology be needed for the work which is now introduced to public notice, it is contained in the Author's belief, that the topics to which it relates are most intimately connected with Christian truth, and conducive to its genuine practical influences. He is not so presumptuous as to imagine that no others have discovered that which he firmly believes to be the "good old path" in which the Saviour and his primitive disciples walked; on the contrary, he rejoices to have been able to bring together the willing testimonies of some of the most illustrious men of modern times, the cultivation of whose minds enabled them to penetrate the mist arising from the prejudices of education; and the simplicity and honesty of whose hearts were evinced in nothing more than in the readiness with which, in spite of popular odium, they bore testimony to "the truth as it is in Jesus." While error on va-

rious subjects of Christian theology most extensively abounds, it is the Author's conviction, that Christian duty requires that all should use their best endeavours to restore the purity of the Christian faith, and the integrity of the Christian discipline. Nor can he persuade himself that a sincere love for the gospel, in its primitive purity, can be incompatible with the most rigid attention to the moral duties, and the most earnest attachment to the sacred principles of Evangelical Righteousness. By the Holy Scriptures, interpreted under the influence of sound judgment and a cheerful piety, he desires that the principles which he has advocated may be freely examined.

Pentonville, March 1st, 1830.



THE
REASONABLENESS OF RELIGION
IN ITS
DOCTRINES AND INSTITUTIONS.

CHAP. I.

“ I BESEECH you, therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” This portion of Holy Writ immediately succeeds what is called the doctrinal part of the Epistle to the Romans, the main scope and object of which were admirably shewn to the English reader by that acute reasoner and excellent scripturalist, Mr. Locke, whose Paraphrase on this Epistle was published more than a century ago. But many of the popular divines of the present day set no value on this rational system of interpretation, and under the pretence of magnifying the Gospel of God, *by separating faith from reason*, appear to remove the only solid basis upon which a superstructure of divine truth can possibly be reared. The consequence of this is too evident in the wild and mystical doctrines which our apostle is made to inculcate upon our submissive belief, who writing to a society of

recent converts in language suggested by their previous associations, describes the universal need of a divine interference, and the grace which was manifested in the mission of Jesus. The Epistles of Paul, however much they may be occupied in the former parts with discussions arising from the union of Gentile and Jew in the Christian Church, contain towards the close a variety of practical exhortations at once perspicuous, valuable, and most influential. These portions of his Epistles are, from the very nature of the case, more capable than others of general application, and much error in doctrine would have been prevented if men had been less curious about that which must to us be comparatively obscure, and had more carefully imbibed the catholic and truly Christian spirit which so beautifully pervades the practical portions.

The offering of animals in sacrifice to Almighty God, formed a prominent part of the Mosaic ritual. The design of sacrifices, which were in use before the institution of the Jewish law, appears to have been, to express the religious sentiments of the worshippers, in the spirit of Orientalism, by *actions* instead of *words*. They were symbols of the devout homage of the mind in acknowledgement of the Divine beneficence, or expressions of penitence intended to conciliate the favour of an offended Deity. No such ritual forms a part of the Christian religion, the history of which represents to us one great and final sacrifice, that of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is

said by a Scriptural writer* “to have once at the end of the world appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” and for his obedience to death he was honoured and rewarded by his heavenly Father.

The figure which the apostle employs is a highly expressive and appropriate one. The Psalmist had said,† “The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, thou wilt not despise.” Under the Christian dispensation, to which Judaism tended as its grand completion, these are the *only* sacrifices. The gaudy and magnificent ritual of the Temple at Jerusalem, as well as the rival and imitative devotion of Mount Gerizim, our Lord predicted would soon terminate,‡ and a worship more simple, and to the world less attractive, would be established wherever the gospel should be professed—the worship of the Father, the Eternal and Immortal Spirit, in spirit and in truth.

The animal sacrifices were first *slain*, and then presented on the altar of devotion. The sacrifice which the Christian was to offer was that of himself, his mind in its most vigorous state, possessed of all the powers bestowed upon it by its Divine Author. It was to be holy, i. e. purified from every blemish, (which rendered an animal an unfit victim,) and separated for this purpose from the engrossing and vitiating pleasures of the world—an acceptable offering to God—and, as the

* Heb. ix. 26. † Psalm li. 17. ‡ John iv. 21—24.

last requisite, which is your reasonable service; or, omitting the expletive *which is*—in this case probably weakening the energetic style of the apostle—your rational service. The expression strictly means a service in which the reason of man forms an essential part. Now that the service which as Christians we are here required to pay to Almighty God, is a rational service, follows,

1. From the fact that our apostle is drawing an oblique contrast between the ceremonial ritual of Judaism and the spiritual oblations of the Gospel. The former was better suited to a people whose minds were uncultivated, and therefore in need of external aids to excite devotion and keep alive the feelings of piety; the latter we should expect to form the essence of a religion so universal in its character as to be suited to the wants and conducive to the edification of “every creature under heaven.” The apostle, it is well known to all who are acquainted with his history, had greatly surmounted the prejudices of his Jewish education; and wedded as his early feelings were to the institutions of his fathers, (for an apparent irreverence to which he had once thought it right to shed the blood of the holy Stephen,) yet when enlightened by Divine Revelation, he could in the spirit of true Catholicism exclaim, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free—but Christ is all and in all.” A frequent expression in St. Paul’s writings for the Christian Religion is *spirit* as

opposed to *flesh*, by which he frequently denotes the law of Moses. This single example may serve to shew the distinction which existed in the Apostle's mind, between the character of the Old and that of the New Covenant, a distinction which manifestly subsists, and was designed by their common Author to subsist between them. Let it not be supposed that into the worship required of the Israelites of old, the religion of the heart did not actually enter. The reverse of this, we are assured in scripture, was the case. A comparison only has been made between the two, and in this case it is beyond a question that the gospel is the more spiritual, the more intellectual religion; the one is the religion of uncultivated children, the other of enlightened men.

2. No other than a rational service can produce a permanently beneficial impression upon the human heart. By a rational service is meant a service in which reason forms a prominent part. And yet there are some who tell us that we must discard and lay aside our reason in the contemplation of divine things : an office which, if it were practicable, would be in the highest degree ungrateful and pernicious. For what is it which so broadly distinguishes man from the inferior animals, but the possession of superior intellect and higher wisdom ? And in what manner, therefore, can we more suitably express our gratitude to the Father of our spirits, than by bringing to the investigation and employments of religion, those exalted faculties with which he has been pleased

to endow us? It has been said, that this reasonable service can alone produce in the heart a permanently beneficial impression; an apparent objection to which doctrine arises from the striking reformation which fanaticism has often wrought upon the character of extensive communities as well as numerous individuals.

Difficult, indeed, would be the problem of moral evil, were there no appearance of a beneficial result issuing from the errors and criminalities of mankind. There can be no reasonable doubt that the occasional, nay frequent, aberrations of the human intellect, have, under the direction of a wise, almighty Governor, been made subservient to the moral education of the human mind; and upon this principle we may regard the benefit which individuals, and even whole communities, have sometimes received from fanatical and erroneous systems. The influence which these have exerted may sometimes be traced to the force of contrast with the preceding state of the community. The early progress of Methodism has been ascribed to the comparative indifference in which the Established clergy were at that time sunk, and a beneficial amelioration was unquestionably produced by the Wesleyan preaching upon some classes of the people, (upon the miners in Cornwall, for instance,) which would in vain have been expected in the ordinary train of religious instruction. Yet it is not necessary to admit that all the articles of that creed which Wesley and his coadjutors inculcated, are verily and indeed

conformable to reason and scripture. The effect may otherwise be accounted for, partly by the cause which has been described, and partly by the plainness, sincerity, and earnestness, with which those preachers of Christian morals enforced the lessons which they taught. Besides, there is so much that is truly excellent in all the systems of Christianity, when you include every thing which these systems teach in relation to man, his Maker, his duty, and his expectations, that this of itself will produce such decidedly beneficial results, as to counteract much of the evil which false notions, either in morals or religion, are, in their own nature and considered separately, calculated to generate.

But let us not be afraid to face the difficulty in all its importance, a difficulty which would be quite overwhelming to a rational system of Christianity, were we to trust the coloured representations, the positive assertions, and the hasty inferences, of many that have written and spoken on this subject. An eloquent and orthodox writer,* in treating on this subject, has referred very explicitly to the beneficial impressions which the Established systems of religion may be supposed to have produced upon the minds of the vulgar in heathen communities; and this too in a section of his work in which it is his object to set forth the peculiar advantages of the *Calvinistic* faith. "The ancients," says he, "were wiser than

* Mr. Wilberforce, in his *Practical View*.

ourselves, and never thought of governing the community in general by their lessons of philosophy. These lessons were confined to the schools of the learned, while for the million a system of religion, such as it was, was kept up, as alone adapted to their grosser natures." The true principle upon which fanaticism has often produced such striking effects, is involved in this statement.

The author just now quoted would be as far as any one from contending for the *truth* of those opinions and of that mythology to which he has attributed so salutary an operation. And yet it is the truth, and only the truth, of those opinions which the uninformed have often to their benefit embraced, that is the question at issue. No one can venture to deny that powerful, and in some instances *useful*, impressions may thus be produced, and even be designed by Providence to be produced. The notorious imposture of Mahometanism, and the mystical reveries of Hindooism, may each in their respective countries, and upon the minds of their devoted adherents, originate many powerful emotions, and (if we may trust to their advocates) impressions favourable to virtue and human welfare. But what has this to do with the abstract truth, or the native reasonableness and propriety, of those opinions themselves?

The writer before quoted contends in favour of Calvinism, that "it is the only form of Christianity which is at all adapted to make impressions upon the lower orders, by strongly interest-

ing the passions of the human mind." It is fully acknowledged, that if the first and legitimate design of religion were strongly to "interest" the passions of the human heart, then Calvinism is a better religion than Unitarianism; but upon this principle we ought not to rest here; for, undeniably, the superstition of the Roman Church has to recommend it a pomp and a splendour better calculated still to produce the designed result: and the wild chimeras and fabulous representations of Heathen idolatry would, according to this standard, become the best and most useful of all religions. But this standard, Christians, is an erroneous, a pernicious one. The proper design of religion is by no means to excite, or "greatly interest," the passions of the lower, or of any class of mankind. To subdue passion, to regulate our propensities, to moderate the violence of appetite, to bring all our thoughts, our wishes, and pursuits, under the controul of reason, of the better and nobler powers of our nature, this, this is the legitimate intent of all true philosophy, and of that sublimest and most exalted philosophy which was taught by Christ and his apostles. The same doctrines were designed by the heavenly Teacher for the rich and the poor, for the learned and the unlearned, since all are liable to be influenced by the same motives, and all are passing through a state of pilgrimage on earth, which, if they be wise and obedient, will conduct to a more noble and enduring inheritance in heaven. Call up to your memories, Chris-

tians, the concise and simple definitions of true religion and vital godliness which are scattered up and down in the history of your Saviour, and in the preaching of his religion by the apostles ; and then satisfy yourselves whether it be essential to the character of a true faith that it should either dazzle us by the splendour of its imagery, or confound us by the mysticism of its doctrines. The love of God, and the love of our neighbour, in the estimation of him who “knew what was in man,” was alone necessary to peace and acceptance. The knowledge of the Father, in his character, perfections, and providence, and the knowledge of the Son, as “the way, the truth, and the life,” was all the knowledge which was required by Jesus to conduct men to everlasting happiness. There is nothing of mysticism or of fanaticism here ; there is nothing to engage us to prostrate our understandings, or to yield a blind and implicit belief. And the preaching of the apostles who went forth under the special superintendence of God to establish the kingdom of Christ, disseminated the principles of a religion equally plain and concise, and alike devoid of mystery with that of their venerated Master. “Righteousness and temperance, and a judgment to come,” were the topics selected by St. Paul, when his object was to describe before Felix the character of faith in Christ. And the same much-abused and perverted instructor, in his charge to a primitive bishop, reckons up the teachings of the gospel morality in the three words, sobriety,

righteousness, and godliness. Where, in the Christian Scriptures, are we to look for the full disclosure of that system on which they who are called Orthodox delight to discourse?—or where is this represented as necessary to be believed and essential to the salvation of the believer? So far from there being a full disclosure of this system in the Bible, when the gospel is preached in its simple and primitive state, without the varnish of modern orthodoxy, or the cumbrous additions of Trinitarian mystery, it is denounced by some as *legal preaching*; its advocates are reckoned unsound, and its teachers the advocates of a meagre Christianity. A meagre Christianity, forsooth! Why that is precisely the Christianity of the primitive believers! Their very name of Ebionites was as appropriate to the scantiness of their creed as to the meanness of their condition. If you seek for a long string of dogmatical propositions, you may have recourse to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England; or if a curiously arranged and extensive scheme of theology be the subject of your inquiry, you will find it in the Westminster Confession of Faith; but if you are satisfied with a simple, easy, and influential creed, open the pages of the New Testament, and embrace with your hearts the gospel of Christ. It was this simple, unobtrusive, and rational scheme of religion, which, accompanied by apostolic energy, and enforced by divine attestation, produced such striking and beneficial effects in the primitive age. Believers then were

uniformly brought over from a lengthy creed to a simple faith, and from a pompous to a spiritual worship. The miraculous power was afterwards withdrawn, when it had answered the purposes of Heaven ; and when it pleased the wise Director of the world to suffer a temporary eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness, the simplicity of the Christian creed was well nigh destroyed, by the numerous additions which it received, till that auspicious era dawned, when the moral luminary was to clear himself from the moral opacity which intercepted his ray, and when believers in Jesus, by the exercise of their rational faculties and comparison between the Christianity of the popular creed and the Christianity of the Scriptures, dared to discard all superfluous and pernicious articles, even at the risk of being accused by men of robbing the gospel of its essential glory ; because that sacred book does itself forbid obedience to the traditions of men for the commandments of God. The invariable process of corruption in doctrine has been from less to more—a process completely the reverse of that which the defenders of prevalent opinions are obliged to maintain.

What hinders, then, that we should, from the various considerations on which we have entered, draw this plain and intelligible inference, that no service but a *rational* service can produce a permanently beneficial impression upon the human heart ? For an impression on the mind to be fitly denominated good, it must not aim, as by a

sudden impulse to transport us heavenwards ; but its influence should rather resemble the mild and increasing light of day, which discovers to the traveller the path to his destined home, or the genial rays of the vernal sun, which kindly co-operate with the other gracious arrangements of nature, to nourish, to foster, and ultimately to ripen, the various products of the soil.

3rdly. No religion but a rational religion can keep pace with the progress of information and the spread of knowledge. What is it which serves to diffuse so wide an alarm, and to excite apprehension for the safety of our holy religion, but an internal consciousness that some of the articles of the popular faith cannot endure a rigid and severe examination ; and that an increase of information, and an expansion of intellect, will diminish the extent of human credulity, and lead men to simplify the tenets of their religious belief ? Let not the sincere follower of him who declared, “ My gospel is founded on a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,”—be alarmed by the occasional appearance of scepticism among the ignorant, or by an open avowal of unbelief among those whose passions often induce a wish, that the gospel may prove a fable. Compute the number of honest unbelievers who have become such by the preaching of a corrupted gospel, and then you will ascertain the stability of the genuine religion of Jesus, when it shall be stripped of all meretricious ornaments. When

you have learned the proportion which the number of those who have patiently examined the evidences for the divine origin of the gospel, as it is found in the Bible, and yet have remained in unbelief, bears to the number of those who have never studied these evidences at all, but have been led away by prejudice, caprice, or some untoward passion, and when you find this proportion to be considerable, *then, and not till then*, will it be time for the sincere Christian to express any anxiety for the interests of that Religion which lies so near his heart. Rejoicing in the progress of information and the spread of knowledge, he can discern nothing in either that is hostile to true religion ; he knows that the fundamental doctrines of the gospel are few, and though not clearly discernible by human reason before they were taught or confirmed by Jesus, are now perfectly consistent with the most enlightened judgment, harmonize with the sacred truths which reason herself can furnish, and clearly tend to advance the cultivation, the present peace, and the final happiness of man. Welcome, then, light ! he will say ; the religion of Jesus can bear, nay invites, the closest inspection ; it is *light* which displays its beauty, it is *light* which illustrates its truth, it is *light* which can alone preserve its enemies from again corrupting and defacing it.

It may be shewn, lastly, that the very spirit and texture of the Bible Theology is opposed to the notion, that Christianity and Reason are at vari-

ance, that Christian worship is any thing distinct from the devout exercise of the best powers and most kindly affections of our rational nature. That two very opposite systems are called by the name of Christianity, must be readily admitted; the one simple and intelligible, the other mysterious and inexplicable. At the announcement of the one, reason assents, and piety rejoices in her natural ally; at the mention of the other, "reason stands aghast, and faith herself is half confounded." Either one of these systems must be grossly defective, or the other must be excessively absurd. If reason be the test of truth, and that it is, all nature cries aloud, we cannot long hesitate which to choose. If implicit faith, not reason, be our guide, why were our faculties bestowed upon us, or how can we defend our Maker from the charge of having bestowed them in vain? But the religion of the Bible is as much opposed to mystery and fanaticism, as reason herself can be. It is no less true that there are two systems, than it is incumbent upon us to adopt the more rational of these; and instead of delighting to set faith and reason at variance, we cannot more suitably express our gratitude to the Giver of reason, than by using it to remove all obscurity and dispel all doubt which may lie in the way of faith, assuredly believing that that religion which is to enter the heart, and leave a deep and salutary impression there, must be a religion that cultivates, while it accords with, the human understanding.

Let us then, Christians, constantly bear in mind that in order to be truly rational, we must pursue religion to its legitimate and avowed design, the amelioration of the dispositions, the controul of the passions, the suppression of impure and unfriendly feelings, and the discharge of all the active duties of social life. To rest satisfied with merely professing our belief in a pure system of religious opinions, and our admiration for its beautiful precepts of morality, while our hearts remain the seat of pride, of hatred, of all uncharitableness, and our lives are disgraced by the habitual neglect of duty, or the indulgence of crime, would be the most unreasonable course which we could possibly pursue. However difficult the task, you owe it to the blessings which you enjoy to perform your duty sedulously and with delight, to shew the world that a simple religion, a meagre Christianity, as it has been called, is abundantly sufficient for the proper direction of life, and every way conducive to the practice of Christian virtue. Refute the pernicious but prevalent error, that religious frenzy is necessary to the cultivation of religious principle. Cherish, by the institutions of divine appointment, and by rational meditation upon the works and ways of God, those holy feelings and benevolent dispositions which enter so materially into genuine godliness, which spread a serene enjoyment over the human countenance, which animate to the work which God has given you to

do, whether in the church or in the world, which will preserve your piety from degenerating into formality, and your benevolence from stagnating in your breasts; but beware yourselves, and endeavour by precept and example to guard others, from esteeming certain wild and fanatical emotions as partaking of the nature of true religion, or conducive to Divine acceptance. The God of grace and mercy will, of his abundant goodness, pardon the errors into which his mistaken worshippers have fallen, under pretence of doing him service; but there is no excuse for those before whom the truth has been unfolded, and whose understandings clearly perceive the requisitions of the gospel, if they neglect to present themselves a living sacrifice, on the altar of Christian devotion, holy and acceptable to God.

The rational service, then, which we must render to God, denotes that we should faithfully perform our religious exercises in the closet, in our families, and in the congregation, and readily comply with the positive institutions of religion. This is one branch, and an important branch, of the duty which we owe to Almighty God, and which, if we perform with sincerity and godly fear, will lead us to discharge the rest of our duties with ease, improvement, and satisfaction. For if our *reason* be engaged in this service, if it be not a mere formal thing, but, as it was intended, call into exercise the noblest faculties and the purest affections of our nature, then our

religion will not be confined to the House of Prayer. Our whole lives will become one scene of devotion, the world in which we act will be to us a temple of piety, and the daily duties which our stations call upon us to perform, so many parts of that rational service which we are bound to render to the God of nature and the God of love.

CHAP. II.

“ THEN cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for *thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*”*

This is a general sentiment, capable of application to a variety of duties ; and, as a principle laid down by the great Founder of Christianity, it deserves the serious attention of all who profess to be his disciples.

Let us endeavour to gain a clear conception of the *meaning* of this sentiment of our Lord. This must be done in this, as in all other cases, by first ascertaining the meaning of the words employed. As the term *righteousness* is somewhat peculiar, it will be proper to devote our attention for a little, to the consideration of its Scriptural usage. The word *righteousness* in the original, as well as in English, denotes in the first place, the virtue of justice, or the paying a due regard to the rights of our fellow-men. It also sometimes denotes virtue in general, but specially those duties which we owe to God, arising from the adoption by the

* Matt. iii. 13.

Scriptural writers of that best of all moral principles, that a regard to the will of God, as it is the highest incentive, so it is the *true criterion* of virtuous excellence. *Righteousness* in this way comes to be used as synonymous with *religious duties* in general, and the relative word *righteous* is applicable to a person who punctually performs these duties. Thus the Psalmist declares, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the *righteous* forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."* "The *righteous* shall inherit the land,"† i. e. not merely the morally good, but they who are actuated by a regard to God's will. And again, "The salvation of the *righteous* is of the Lord."‡

In the address originally delivered to Solomon, and applied by the writer to the Hebrews to Jesus of Nazareth, the word *righteousness* occurs in the corresponding sense. "Thou hast loved *righteousness* and hated iniquity, therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."§ *Righteousness* must here denote the whole religious discipline, all the duties which the Lord our God requireth of us.

"Take heed," said the Saviour, "that you do not your alms to be seen of men,"|| or, according to the reading of the best edition of the Christian Scriptures, "Take heed that you do not your *righteousness*, your acts of *righteousness*, to be seen of men," using a general word, which in-

* Ps. xxxvii. 25. † Ps. xxxvii. 29. ‡ Ps. xxxvii. 39.

§ Chap. i. 9. || Matt. vi. 1.

cludes almsgiving, and prayer, and all other duties. And in this sense the word must be understood in the above-mentioned passage. Thus it becometh us to *fulfil all righteousness, to comply with all the divine commands*, to fill up the whole measure of human duty, to attend to and obey every ordinance of divine appointment.

Such is the view which, in the exercise of fair and genuine criticism, we must take of our great Master's declaration. And understanding it in this sense, Dr. Priestley remarks upon it,* "So different were our Lord's sentiments and conduct from theirs who neglect the positive institutions of religion." Dr. Priestley says, "the *positive* institutions," for though Christ does not mean to give the sanction of his authority to these duties alone (since the tenor of his preaching was the entire reverse of this), yet, using as he does a universal mode of expression, it is obvious that the positive duties of religion must be included, and are intended to be enforced by our Saviour as well as those which are in their essence of a strictly moral nature. Nothing can be more decisive than this, because it was to a positive institution, the ordinance of baptism, upon repentance, that the words were expressly applied by our Saviour.

By a moral duty is meant, any obligation arising from the very nature of things in reference to our conduct towards our fellow creatures, and the government of ourselves. Thus, to tell

* See Note (A).

the truth every man to his neighbour, is a moral duty directly binding upon us as members of civil society, the utility of which the meanest person must perceive, and the importance of which arises from its necessity to the happiness and very continuance of society. Thus also, a strict regard to the rights of property, supposing those rights previously defined, is a moral duty, without obeying which we cannot be good members of society, or entitled to the appellation of just and honest persons. Again, there are other duties, such as those of *temperance*, which relate more immediately to *ourselves* than to others, which, however they may be neglected by headstrong and foolish persons, are nevertheless directly conducive to our happiness, and may be shewn to have no slight connexion with our duty even to other men; inasmuch as a neglect of the laws of temperance will consume that time and weaken those powers of usefulness which we might and ought to have employed for the benefit of our fellow-creatures. They cannot truly say, "*we have defrauded no man,*" who, although they may not be conscious of having made any direct inroad upon the property of others, have yet deprived mankind of those active and useful exertions, which, but for self-indulgence, they might have made for the instruction of the ignorant and the relief of the wretched; and from the obligation of which no son or daughter of Adam, on whom the talent has been bestowed, is in the eye of God exempted.

There are duties also which consist rather in

the cultivation of dispositions than in the performance of external actions. It is our duty to cherish a benevolent disposition towards mankind, even when we are placed in circumstances which prevent our stretching out the hand for the relief of the sick and needy. It is our duty to cherish a forgiving and candid temper even when by the malicious violence of persecution this is the only offering which we can present at the shrine of piety. And, indeed, the moral duties which we owe to God, must either consist wholly in the cultivation of right affections towards him, or resolve themselves into those positive, or as they are also called, instrumental duties, the nature of which we are employed in describing. To the Almighty it is obvious that we can render no benefit. All the intercourse which is kept up between the Creator and the creature must be for the benefit of the latter. The light of nature itself countenances the performance of such duties, which is shewn by the universal compliance with them, to a certain extent. Now the Religion of the Bible expressly enforces these duties with its authority. The law which was given to the Jews, while it by no means neglected the weightier matters of justice, mercy, and temperance, laid great stress upon a varitey of positive injunctions of a ritual nature. Yet these injunctions, proceeding from the almighty Founder of their nation, who had distinguished their forefathers by such peculiar mercies, were rightly deemed as possessing an authority not much inferior to that

which pertained to the ordinary duties of life, arising from the nature of man and his station in society. These instrumental duties we know that they rigidly performed, sometimes to the neglect of the dictates of benevolence and purity; but this was a perversion of their religion, by no means justly arising from a regard to the injunctions of their law, and which called down upon them the severe and oft-repeated exhortations of God's chosen Messengers. "The solemn fasts" unsanctified by real devotion, and the vain oblations consisting in the mere ceremonial, are expressly rejected by the word of the Lord. And God plainly declares that he would have "mercy, and not sacrifice," which words denote, not that sacrifice properly performed would be rejected by him, but that benevolence was held by him in higher estimation than rites and ceremonies, and ought to be so regarded by his worshippers. And Christ, who came from the Father to explain and enforce human duty, inculcated the same doctrine in reference to the sabbath-day. The very persons who complained because the disciples had departed from the Pharisaic strictness with which that day was observed, suffered the base feelings of anger and malevolence towards our divine Instructor to rise unchecked in their bosoms, which led our Lord to lay down the valuable maxim, that the instrumental duties are means to accomplish an end, and that their object is altogether defeated if they received the whole attention, and the end itself be neglected. For what signifies

the most punctual attendance at church, and even a regular participation in the solemn ordinances of our religion, if the life belie these professions of piety, and the heart be far removed from the feelings of sincere devotion? This is a consideration which believers should often impress upon their minds. We cannot otherwise establish our claim to be truly *rational* worshippers. We do not fully comply with the spirit of that holy religion which hath been given us.

It affords but a melancholy view of the proneness of mankind to superstition, and of the facility with which the most solemn truths may be corrupted, and the best institutions may be perverted, to take a survey of the world, not in past generations only, but even in the present day. We read with disgust bordering upon horror, of the vain and mischievous attempts of men in former ages to propitiate the Deity by acts essentially inconsistent with the dictates of reason and virtue. Our hearts are wrung with anguish when we think of the sufferings which mistaken man has been eager to inflict on his brother, from the pernicious conviction that he in this way rendered the most acceptable service to the common Father of the human race.

In some countries that are denominated *Christian*, even in the present day, we have too much reason to fear that the prevailing principles savour rather of superstitious attachment to forms and ceremonies, than of the genuine spirit of pure and undefiled religion. The splendid exterior of

piety shall be gazed at by the awe-struck worshippers, while profound ignorance shall reign in their minds as to the true nature and proper evidence of the Christian faith. That shall be deemed by many nominal believers a dangerous and innovating spirit, which can alone conduct to rational and consistent sentiments; and the very persons who are most distinguished for the services which they are rendering to the reasonable religion of Christ and the apostles, shall be looked on with mingled feelings of dislike and horror, and regarded as the peculiar objects of Heaven's indignation.

Such a state of things, unhappily too prevalent, must be regarded as a plain perversion of true religion, as the natural effect of ignorance and ill-governed feeling, and by no means reflecting the least disgrace upon that blessed cause which was cemented by the blood of our Saviour, and attested by the unwavering constancy of his first disciples.

Nothing, however, is more common among men than the disposition to run into extremes; and hence, because superstition has laid an undue stress upon institutions of a positive nature, and thereby produced mischievous effects—some persons, from an excessive apprehension of these consequences, have discovered no slight inclination to discard ritual institutions altogether, and to attempt the hopeless task of making men moral and religious without the use of those means which Heaven in mercy has provided.

The Christian institutions which are strictly positive, I apprehend to be the following: the public and private worship of Almighty God, including the establishment of regular Christian Societies; the ordinance of baptism, or immersion of the body in water, upon the declaration of repentance and faith in Christ; and the participation of a social meal, instituted by our Saviour on the evening before his crucifixion, connected by him with the remembrance of his sufferings on our behalf, and designed to inculcate a universal spirit of brotherly kindness and charity.

Now, it may be without hesitation admitted, that all these institutions have been greatly abused, and much perverted from their original design. The simple worship of Almighty God, as enjoined in the sacred pages, and practised in the first age of the church, has in too many cases degenerated into a pompous and unmeaning ceremonial, from which the spirit of pure devotion has taken her departure. The heralds of the gospel of peace have too often formed an unholy alliance with the contentious and martial princes of this world; the ministers of Jesus have consented to become the instruments of perpetuating ignorance and inculcating slavish submission, and thereby promoting the purposes of an impious ambition. The rite of baptism has been supposed absolutely essential to salvation, and made a substitute for the weightier matters of the law; and, in the practice of the larger part of Christen-

dom, has been reduced from a manly and rational service in which the understanding should be fully employed, to a childish and unmeaning form, by some regarded with superstitious reverence, and by others treated with indifference, unsuited surely to an ordinance of divine appointment, and which clearly indicates a measure of shame with the work of man's invention and device; while the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, according to its original appointment a simple and beautiful means of cherishing feelings of gratitude to man's best benefactor, under God the author of his being, has been transformed by the Romish Church into the mysterious and revolting sacrifice of the mass, and connected with the paradoxical and monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation. Such considerations as these should be so far, however, from producing indifference to any institute of divine appointment, that it ought to redouble our energies, and inflame our zeal, for the glory of God and the good of mankind, to restore Christianity to the state in which it proceeded from its heavenly Author, and to vindicate at once the *integrity* as well as purity of our most holy faith.

Having now considered positive institutions in general, we shall proceed to an examination of the evidence for the particular ordinance of Christian Baptism.

CHAP. III.

WE have made some inquiry into the meaning of a declaration delivered by our Saviour, (Matt. iii. 15,) and found that his language is general, that the term "righteousness" which he employs, includes the whole of human duty, having respect not merely to those obligations which are called *moral*, but also to institutions of a *positive* nature. The difference between these two branches of duty has been pointed out. It was remarked as a proof that a regard to positive institutions must have been included in our Lord's sentiment, that it was to an ordinance of this nature that it was expressly applied by him. It was the rite of baptism as administered by John, that occasioned the delivery of these remarkable words. John appeared in the desert of Judea, proclaiming the necessity of repentance and newness of life as a preparation for the Messiah's kingdom. This exhortation was made to persons of all ranks and occupations; and numbers flocked to him from all parts of the country, in order to comply with the divinely-appointed mode* of making known their resolution of repentance, and their willingness to act in a manner becoming the ex-

* See note B.

pectants of the King of Israel. Nor was the holy Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee inattentive to the call of this preacher of reformation ; but in a way that was characteristic of his modesty, he allowed, it should appear, the great mass of candidates to have been baptized,* before he left his peaceful and pious retreat to bear testimony to the law of God, and make profession of his love of holiness. As soon as this holy personage had appeared before him, and signified his intention, John, knowing the Nazarene's moral superiority, either by actual information from Jews who had previously come from that quarter, or by means of that family connexion which subsisted between these two excellent persons, agreeably to the account contained in Luke's introductory narrative,† would have prevented his compliance with an institution expressly designed for those who, conscious of sin, were anxious to experience an entire repentance. But Jesus, we know on the express authority of the sacred writers, was "without sin," yet yielded obedience to this divine command from his governing principle of piety. And it is unquestionably the duty of all mankind, whatever progress they have made in excellence, to aim at perfect and universal righteousness, though we have no reason to believe that any one of Christ's followers has ever attained to the full measure of his virtue and devotion ; yet many have arrived at very high degrees

* Luke iii. 21.

† Chap. i. 36.

of Christian worth, and those have been most willing to admit the transcendant excellence of their Saviour, to gain which they have used their utmost efforts, without arriving at it; like the traveller who, having surpassed mountain after mountain, still perceives above him the cloud-capt summit towering over all his exertions, and rendering it hopeless for him to reach its height.

Such was the holy Jesus, such the exalted character of him whom John, that had called to him the inhabitants of Palestine, forbade to come to the baptism of repentance; but his delight it was to do the will of God; for that which is written of him in the volume of Scripture, "Lo! I come to do thy will," is amply verified in the conduct of his life, and in the dispositions which shine so clearly throughout his actions; he was not thus to be prevented from the discharge of what he believed a duty, even though a prophet of the Most High had expressed his private opinion that such an act was in his case unnecessary. "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us" (it becometh all human beings, and Jesus evidently reckoned himself among the number) "to fulfil all righteousness." Then John, overcome by the firmness of the candidate, and incapable of resisting the sound religious maxim which he inculcated, agreed to administer to him also the baptism of repentance, which his commission from heaven authorized him to employ. The splendid scene which presently followed, while it furnished to John the promised

token of the Messiah's dignity, and prepared the mind of Jesus himself for the subsequent communications of knowledge and power, may justly be regarded as a most powerful attestation to the uprightness of the Nazarene's character, and to the perfect rectitude of his intentions and behaviour on the present occasion. And thus may Christians rest assured, though such a signal display of the divine glory must not be expected in ordinary cases, that when they act rightly, and fearlessly follow the dictates of their best judgment, a gleam of joy will pass through their minds, and the sunshine of delight gladden their hearts, more transporting in its effects by far, than the light from heaven which pleases the bodily eye.

We have thus accompanied our Saviour in what he regarded the performance of a duty, and we have witnessed the Divine approbation most explicitly declaring of this act, as well as of his previous life, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The question naturally occurs, Was this act of baptism a peculiar action of our Lord's life, proper for him to perform, but unsuitable for others to imitate, like the fasting forty days in the wilderness, the walking on the water, or any of the stupendous miracles proposed for the confirmation of our faith, but not as models for our imitation? This is a very proper question, to the determination of which we must of course consult the narratives of our Saviour's ministry, and the history of the first pro-

pagation of his religion. And if we find that none of his disciples, under the sanction of his authority, submitted to the same rite, and that his directions to his followers contain no mention of this accompaniment to religious profession, then there may be some probability in the inference that it was designed for himself alone. But what is the actual state of this question ?

The first allusion to baptism after Christ's own submission to the rite, appears in the remarkable conversation which he held with the Jewish ruler, Nicodemus, who came to him by night. "Unless a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."*

Soon after this feast of the Passover, the Evangelist expressly informs us that Jesus and his disciples went into the country of Judea, and there he remained with them and baptized.† And although this assertion that Christ baptized is afterwards qualified by the Evangelist, and explained of the disciples, and not Jesus himself, being the direct instruments in administering this ordinance;‡ yet does the assertion amount to the same thing, because the authority derived to the institution from the express sanction and presence of the Saviour, cannot be deemed at all inferior to that which would have resulted from his personally taking part in the administration.§ We are justified in here maintaining also, that

* See note C.

† John iv. 2.

‡ John iii. 22.

§ See note D.

the cases of baptism receiving our Lord's sanction at this time were not few and solitary, but surpassed in number even those of the Baptist himself in this season of his ministry; and led some disciples of the latter, jealous for the imagined honour and superiority of their Master, to come to him with the hyperbolic information, "Master, he who was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou didst bear witness, behold he also baptizeth, and *all men come to him.*"* The expression of the Evangelist when describing a motive of his Master's early removal from Judea into Galilee, "When the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John," implies this at least, that discipling and baptizing went together; the one being the symbol whereby the person indicated his becoming a believer and a follower. After this, indeed, we find no express mention during the account of our Saviour's ministry, of the performance of the rite of baptism. It is said that the apostles went out preaching repentance.† It is not said that they discontinued the initiatory rite in the performance of which we have found them already engaged; the natural inference, therefore, is, that the same mode was observed of expressing the faith of their converts. It should be recollected that Jesus did only covertly intimate his Messiahship, during the earlier part of his ministry; that the first converts, perhaps, only expressed

* John iii. 26.

† Mark vi. 12.

their repentance as preparatory to the coming of the Messiah ; and that it is in the closing scenes of our Lord's ministry, and the conduct of his apostles, imbued with his spirit and acting under his authority, that we can look most reasonably for the enforcement of the rite, if it were designed by the great Head of the church to form a part of his religious discipline in subsequent ages.

Christ, during his earthly ministry, preached the *future* approach of the kingdom of heaven.* The prayer which he prescribed to his disciples implored its future coming.† At the last supper his language intimated that it was not yet arrived.‡ But the foundation was laid in the great event of his resurrection from the dead. It was on the rock of the Arimathean that he built his church ; because he was by his resurrection from the dead authoritatively declared to be the Son of God,§ i. e. the Messiah. After his resurrection, therefore, we may expect him to speak more definitively of the constitution of his church, and of the laws of his kingdom. Naturally do we breathe the wish that we could have joined the company of the disciples, during the forty days when our risen Saviour was seen by his chosen witnesses, and spake to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. But our disappointment may well be removed, when we consider that we possess so rational and authentic a record of what the apostles did and taught at

* Matt. iv. 17.

† Matt. vi. 10.

‡ Luke xxii. 18.

§ Rom. i. 4.

the first planting of Christianity in Asia Minor, Greece, and other countries ; and that there can be no reason to suppose that they departed from the injunctions which they had received from a Master, whose high dignity must have been rendered so impressive by the events which had occurred.

Let us hear, then, the solemn accents of instruction which Christ addressed to those who were to be the supporters of his religion, when he should be finally withdrawn from the world. We shall bring together the statements of the evangelists. “ All power has been conferred on me in heaven and earth. Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, (the promised gift of the Holy Spirit,) but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem till ye be endued with power from on high ; (then) go forth into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, (or, according to Matthew, make disciples of all nations,) baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ;” (admitting them by baptism to a profession of faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,)* “ teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo ! I am with you always, even to the end of the world. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.”†

* See note E.

† Matt. xxviii. 19, 20 ; Mark xvi. 15, 16 ; Luke xxiv. 49. See note F.

How, then, did the apostles act in the affair of baptism, after the ascension of their Master? This question must be answered by an examination of the book of Acts, and the Epistles to the churches, which by Divine Providence have been happily preserved.

On that memorable day when, in agreement with the prediction that the disciples should be baptized, or copiously imbued, with the Holy Spirit, the apostles began to speak in other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance, three thousand persons were convinced, by the discourse of Pèter, of the great crime of their nation, and of the true Messiahship of Jesus. And when they eagerly inquired of their ardent instructor, "Brethren, what shall we do?" his answer was, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day were added to the church three thousand souls." *

We next read of the mission of Philip, one of the seven deacons, into Samaria; and we are informed that the consequence of his preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus, was, that they who had been previously seduced by the magical arts of Simon, believed and were baptized, both men and women. And Simon himself believed also; and when he

* Acts ii. 37—41.

was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the signs and great miracles which he did. This was prior to their receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit—a privilege which could be conferred by an apostle only, and this Philip was not one of the twelve. As yet they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Philip shortly after goes, under the direction of the Spirit, on another embassy, and in the road from Jerusalem to Gaza meets a man of rank, an officer in the court of the Ethiopian queen, who was a proselyte to the theology of Judaism, and was piously improving his time as he returned to his own country from Jerusalem, by reading the words of the prophet Isaiah. The Christian preacher cordially embraced this opportunity of making a suitable application of the language of the evangelical prophet, and the history informs us that his address carried conviction to the breast of this illustrious foreigner, and that he voluntarily proposed himself as a candidate for the rite of baptism, to which Philip readily assented. “And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him.”†

The narrative of St. Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, next brings us acquainted with the most eminent of Christ’s labourers in the vineyard, who, in the preceding part of the Christian history, had been breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the

* Acts viii. 5—17.

† Acts viii. 26—38.

Lord. But God was pleased to arrest him in his mad career, and to shed the light of gospel truth upon his benighted mind. To the natural inquiry of the astonished Saul, who now first contemplated the character and cause of Jesus as they ought to be viewed, "What wilt thou have me to do?" the answer referred him to the judgment and direction of Ananias, one of the leaders of the church at Damascus. From this disciple he received the restoration of his sight; and his first action, when he arose, was to submit to baptism,* agreeably, it must appear by this time, to the common practice in the case of acknowledgment of the Christian faith.

The tenth chapter of this interesting record is occupied with the detail of the conversion of Cornelius, the Roman centurion. On him and the members of his house the Holy Spirit fell, unusually, prior to their submission to the rite of baptism; but the event itself is employed by the Apostle Peter to evince the propriety of administering to them the customary sign of reception into the Christian church. "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." †

In the second apostolic journey of St. Paul, we are presented with the conversion of Lydia, a seller of purple from Thyatira, who was herself

* Acts ix. 18.

† Acts x. 48.

baptized, and her household ; the evidence which had satisfied her having also appeared sufficient to those who were connected with her.* The same city of Philippi, the scene of Lydia's conversion, was the place also where Paul and Silas were imprisoned, and where that event was made the instrument in the hands of Providence of converting the jailer and the members of his house. Of them also it is recorded, that when they had washed the stripes which had been cruelly inflicted by the magistrates upon the holy missionaries, their first act was to profess faith in Christ by the same significant rite which we find employed in the preceding instances.† Afterwards we find it on record that Crispus, the ruler of the Corinthian synagogue, together with many of the inhabitants of that licentious city, being convinced of the truth, were baptized, several of them by the hands of the Apostle Paul.‡ As the numbers who believed are mentioned after the historian had informed us that Paul had departed from the Jews and gone to the Gentiles, it is reasonable to presume that many of the latter must have been included among the number that were baptized. The apostle, in his First Epistle to that church, composed evidently of Gentiles as well as Jews,§ speaks of them, generally, as baptized : “ Were ye baptized in the name of Paul ? ” This is evidence against the strange, novel opinion, that bap-

* Acts xvi. 14, 15.

† Vers. 25—40.

‡ Acts xviii. 8 ; 1 Cor. i. 14—17. § 1 Cor. xii. 2.

tism was in the first age of the church confined to the Jewish converts.*

We next meet with the remarkable instance, in the 19th chapter, of the twelve disciples of John whom Paul found at Ephesus. They had, perhaps, received instruction from Apollos during his residence in that city.† They had been baptized only into John's baptism, and were ignorant of the communications of the Holy Spirit. After hearing the apostle, and embracing the Christian religion, they were again baptized, not into John's baptism, but into the name of the Lord Jesus.‡ This case is, I think, a clear refutation of that opinion which would resolve baptism altogether into a part of the religious system of John; for if St. Paul were the accredited teacher of the Christian faith, the rite is to be alike observed by the followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

The subsequent part of St. Luke's narrative is occupied with the recital of Paul's journey to Jerusalem, his apprehension there, the several defences which he made, and the account of his voyage to Rome; and though he diligently employed his opportunities in still acting as the herald of the gospel of peace, and removing the spiritual bonds which confined those who visited him in his earthly prison, yet would he be necessarily precluded from the power of administering the rite of baptism. And here it may be observed, that Paul evidently laid no superstitious stress on

* See note G. † Acts xviii. 24. ‡ Acts xix. 1—7.

this ordinance, and chose what he deemed the better part of instruction and conversion. "For Christ," said he, "sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel;"* not meaning by this to insinuate, as it has, I think, been strangely argued, that baptism was no part of the Christian's duty, or of the apostle's office; for, in that case, why did he submit to it himself, and actually administer it in the several instances which he particularizes, even in one district?†—but intending to express his opinion that his time might be more usefully devoted to the work of instruction, while the inferior employment of receiving the believers' confession, and assisting them in the ordinary symbolic action by which their faith was manifested, could be well performed by his assistants in the work of the Lord. Of St. Paul, I think from this survey, it may be affirmed, as it has already been remarked of our blessed Lord himself, that he gave the full weight of his influence and authority to believers' baptism. This conclusion is abundantly corroborated by the allusions made to this rite, and the illustrations which he derives thence, in his Epistles.‡

We found in the book of Acts that others be-

* 1 Cor. i. 17. † Acts ix. 18; 1 Cor. i. 14—16, and note H.

‡ I have not observed any allusion to the initiatory rite in the Epistle to the Philippians; but no objector to this ordinance will venture to rest any thing on that circumstance, if he be familiar with the contents of the 16th chapter of the Acts. See note I.

side St. Paul employed themselves, as occasion offered, in administering the baptismal ordinance; nor can any reason be adduced to shew that any of the apostles, or first preachers of the Christian religion, ventured to disregard the positive command of Christ, delivered in the interval between his resurrection and ascension. Peter, in his First Epistle, after speaking of Noah as in his days a preacher of righteousness, and of the preservation of a certain number from the destruction produced by the deluge, introduces mention of baptism, which he calls in the original, though this is not discernible in the English version, *the antitype* to the deluge, “which even now saveth us” from the greater punishments denounced against sin, provided it be submitted to with the right dispositions, and be not confined to the removal of external impurity, but be accompanied with “the answer of a good conscience towards God.”* And in this doctrine the apostle is but repeating in different terms what his Master had before declared to the timid and half-consistent Nicodemus, “Unless a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Upon this examination of the scriptural evidence for baptism, we shall make a few remarks.

1. It is evident that the persons who submitted to baptism were those who felt the force of the proofs exhibited by Christ or the Apostles of the truth of his Messiahship; persons

* 1 Pet. iii. 21.

who, from conviction, proposed to make the Christian law the rule of their lives. The common formulary is, "they believed, and were baptized;" which evidently implies that they must have arrived at years of discretion, when the understanding is in some measure ripened, and the mind is capable of discerning good from evil.*

2. With regard to the manner of administering this rite, a circumstance, it is admitted, not of the first importance, but concerning which it is well for us to know what information can be obtained, I remark, that all the evidence from the words that are employed, and the description which is given of the mode of proceeding in ancient times, leaves no doubt whatever upon my mind, that the primitive disciples were invariably baptized by the immersion of the whole body. Hence those figurative expressions of "being buried with Christ in baptism," and the comparison of baptism to the deluge, than which, according to the modern mode of administering it, no language could be more unappropriate or inapplicable. Two historical facts, perhaps not sufficiently known, are calculated to throw light on this part of the subject. One is, that the general practice of administering the rite, even in the English Church, till about the time of the Protectorate, though children were the subjects of it, was by *immersion*, of which numerous proofs are

* For a consideration of the objections to this proposition, see the extract from Milton's Treatise of Christian Doctrine, in the Appendix.

still existing, in the fonts contained in the cathedrals, and many other churches, large enough to contain the whole body of the infant, into which in recent times a basin has been placed, that being now discovered to contain water enough. And so it would, if there were any virtue in the water, and a mysterious efficacy, which some fancy, were conveyed to the infant at the time of the administration. This rite, for which some other name than baptism should be used, was derived by Protestants from the Romanists, and should revert to the Catholics whence it came. The other fact to which I refer is this, that the Greek Church, the members of which may be supposed to enter *as well as* any other into the meaning of the Greek word translated *baptize*, have invariably adopted the practice of immersion.*

3. And, confining ourselves to the Scriptural evidence, we should have no doubt, I think, that the rite of baptism was to continue in the Christian Church so long as that church exists. No one now is born a Christian, any more than in the days of the Apostles. Christianity is now to be adopted on conviction, as much as it was then. The world now lieth in wickedness, as it did then; and the desirableness is still apparent to separate those who would put on Christ, from those who care for none of these things.

It must be evident that baptism was not an

* Note K.

accidental circumstance belonging to the Christian religion, concerning which it is indifferent whether it formed a part of the religion or not ; but was solemnly and deliberately incorporated with it by our Saviour himself, when he gave directions to his apostles respecting the obligations which their relation to him imposed. And we have found a great variety of occasions in which they baptized those who made profession of faith.

What sound argument, then, is opposed to the conclusion, that a rite which Jesus sanctioned by his presence and express recommendation, and which he commanded his disciples to practise, was designed for the Christian community in all the periods of its history ? To say that baptism savours of an oriental custom, is only to affirm what no one can question, that Christianity originated in the East. To say that it cannot be safely practised in this country, is to call in question the truth of a fact which is exemplified every year in the different districts of the island. To say (as has been lately said) that the rite of baptism was not designed for the descendants of Gentiles, is to make an assertion, not only unaccompanied by the least evidence, but which is palpably opposed by several of the cases of baptism in the Acts of the Apostles, by many references to the universality of the practice in the Epistles, and by the express words of the baptismal commission, which commands the disciples to carry their religion into all nations, (i. e. not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles,) and to

preach the gospel to the whole creation, to every human being capable of attending to it.

It is not necessary to maintain that the rite of baptism has in all cases been conducted with the propriety which a sacred rite, an institution of the most reasonable of all religions, demands at our hands ; perhaps even, as it is observed by the Christians denominated Baptists, it is susceptible of some improvement, by which is meant a nearer approach to the primitive mode of observance. But as most of the early buildings for Dissenting worship were, from the necessity of the times, erected in the corners and confined places of our towns, (the conscientious worshippers, fearing the wonted intolerance of the Government,) so the Christian practice of immersion (to which the Saviour of the world himself submitted under no other canopy than the clefted heavens) has, from the false delicacy of the times, been administered chiefly in the places of religious worship.

I have noticed some of the modes of evading the obligation of baptism, which we occasionally encounter among Christians possessed of intelligence and love of truth.

It is too well known to require more than the simple statement, that the ordinary mode in which baptism is administered by Christian ministers, differs essentially from that which, upon the clearest of all possible evidence, was alone prevalent in the apostolic age. But, what is vastly more important than the manner in which the

ordinance is administered, the age in which, in the great majority of cases, the rite is practised, is of itself sufficient to annihilate the express object of the institution; and to reduce that which is in itself a manly, significant, impressive, and reasonable service, into an unmeaning, childish, trifling, unauthorized, irrational form. I believe that the practice of sprinkling babes is often a very harmless practice; it assumes that character when practised among the class of English Presbyterians; but it is not, I conceive, harmless when it is associated with the unchristian notion, that human beings come into the world the objects of their Maker's wrath; and the perpetuation of this notion seems the chief effect of the practice as adopted by the Calvinists and the less informed Church-people of this country. But nothing can be more distinct from such a rite than the "one baptism" which St. Paul mentions in his Epistle to the Ephesians, which he considered a profession of faith, and which was so regarded by Philip, the Evangelist, when the Ethiopian treasurer applied to him for baptism: "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." But what claim can the innocent babe make to an acknowledgment of the principles of the Christian faith?

Let not the tender parent, let not the fond and anxious mother, for a moment imagine that the idea of baptism which is here advocated, would deprive their children of any religious privilege, or that it is unfavourable to the happiness of

those whom the strongest and most amiable feelings of our nature impel them to love. The God of mercy holds those guiltless to whom he has not furnished the time for expanded intellect and unfolded intelligence. The principle of his moral government is thus expressed in the language of inspiration: "Where no law is, there is no transgression." And this may justly be considered as implying the additional principle, Where no knowledge of the law exists, there can be no possibility of transgression.

What remains, then, but that I should endeavour to possess my readers with a sense of the practical effects which, when it is rightly employed, may be expected to follow from this Christian institution? I have called it a *Christian* institution. And is any distinct proof necessary to shew that every part of the Christian system is conducive to holiness, to righteousness, and piety? Its value, then, is obvious,

From its being a distinct and unequivocal expression of the conviction of important truth resting upon the believer's mind. The preparation which ought in all cases to be made before a person employs this means of grace, and makes this profession of his belief, is of itself of very high importance, and of unquestionable value. The act is an act of duty to Him who is competent to inquire into the evidence in favour of its being a portion of the Christian discipline, and who perceives the force of that evidence. And the performance of an *act of duty* can never be

unattended with a saving efficacy. The language of the Apostle Peter is as true now as when he dictated the holy sentiment, "Baptism even now saveth us, not, indeed, the putting away the filth of the flesh," nor is to be regarded as a mere ceremonial; but it derives its value from the inward grace, or thing signified, "the answer of a good conscience towards God."

Baptism is not only an expression of faith in the way pointed out by the great Head of the church, who certainly knew what was best adapted to minister to holiness, and to secure the obedience of his disciples; but it is also expressive of sincere and heartfelt repentance, consciousness of the sins of our youth, and the neglect of duty by which every year of our lives has been characterized, an unfeigned purpose of newness of life, and a desire to come under the complete obligation of the Christian law, which is the law of the purest reason, the holiest and warmest affection, the most expanded and impartial benevolence, the most sublime and elevated piety, the most complete and universal righteousness.

Say not, then, some other means are more adequate to the production of these great effects; nor refuse to comply with the appointed means, because so simple, and, in the judgment of many, so little calculated to conduce to the full moral effect. Remember the reproof administered in ancient times to Naaman, the proud captain of the Syrian host, when the prophet had required of him the simple duty of bathing himself seven times in the

river Jordan. "Are not Arbana and Pharphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? And his servant came near and spake unto him, and said, 'My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then when he sayeth to thee, Wash and be clean! Then went he down and dipped himself'" (the very word is here used in the Greek version of the Old Testament which is employed by the apostles in the New) "seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."*

But is the common feeling of dislike to the ordinance of baptism, as we find it laid down in the New Testament, a whit more reasonable or better founded than the hesitation and repugnance of the captain of the Syrian host to comply with the authority of the prophet? They both partake of the nature of *prejudice*. And what is prejudice but a *prejudging* of a question, independently of, and often in direct opposition to, evidence? And is this course to be justified in relation to a positive command coming from a Teacher whom all Christians profess to regard with feelings of reverence and ardent, grateful attachment? Christians believe that Jesus knew what was in man; of course, therefore, he knew what was adapted to promote the moral and reli-

* 2 Kings v. 14.

gious improvement of mankind; and yet, from some dislike to the rite which he sanctioned with the utmost possible plainness, some are found to express their indisposition to comply with it; and others, to give some colour of plausibility to their objections, go about to invent salvos, and scrape together arguments, (if so they can be called,) which their own understandings, when exercised on any other subjects, would perceive to be destitute of all pretension to clearness or force.

The general conclusion I apprehend to be this, that religion is a personal concern; that the Christian religion is “a reasonable service;” that the submission to baptism is a part of that religion; that the disposition of piety, which can alone render any act acceptable, will draw down the Divine blessing upon every such effort to strengthen the Christian principle, and to extend the holy influence of Christ’s gospel; that as “Christ’s church is founded upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it;” so every ordinance of his religion must last as long as his religion itself shall last. The indifference of some, the ignorance of others, the wilful neglect of the rest, will have no effect upon the ultimate success of *the truth*. The gracious Father of his creatures, the God and Father of Jesus, will uphold that religion which he at first introduced by supernatural evidence. The word of God records that the Saviour of the world submitted to the baptism of repentance; the apostles, acting agree-

ably to his express command, received thousands into the church by this rite, and no other. The evidence for these facts lies in the Scriptures, which all have in their possession. The first Christians "believed, and were baptized;" and Christ, by his gospel, is now saying to every believer who has not yet complied, "Go and do thou likewise."

NOTES.

NOTE A, p. 21.

THE whole sentence in Dr. Priestley is this, which I respectfully submit to those of my readers who (as I do myself) reverence that name as one of the greatest in the history of enlightened Christians. "Here was an institution designed for general use, without particular exceptions, which did not at all interfere with any moral obligation, and with which, therefore, he [Christ] thought himself bound to comply. So different were our Lord's sentiments and conduct from theirs who neglect the positive institutions of religion."—PRIESTLEY'S *Notes on Scripture*.

See also many excellent observations on the propriety of Positive Institutions, in Dr. James Foster's *Usefulness, Truth, and Excellency, of the Christian Revelation*, Ch. iv. and v. I shall select a single paragraph :

"Christianity, as it requires only two or three plain and useful positive duties, and strictly obliges its professors not to add to them, by declaring against all impositions,* and asserting more particularly that the religion enjoined in the gospel is pure and spiritual,† not to be incumbered and corrupted by human forms and ceremonies—nay, that we worship God in vain, if we teach for doctrines the commandments of men;‡ Christianity, I say, seems by these things to have guarded more effectually against enthusiasm and superstition, than if it had explicitly required only moral duties, and left it to every man's fancy to invent the means of religion for himself. For, by this excellent constitution,

* Rom. xiv. 2—5 ; Gal. v. 4, 13.

† John iv. 23, 24.

‡ Matt. xv. 9.

all the means of religion, being of God's appointing, will be wise and rational; and if men understand and resolve to follow the directions of the revelation, nothing that is weak and enthusiastical can be introduced."

The same author's rational sentiments respecting the scriptural rite of baptism may be seen in the Appendix.

NOTE B, p. 29.

The proof of divine appointment is derived from John's own words as related by the Evangelist, John i. 35, "And I knew him not: but *he that sent me to baptize with water*, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizeth with the Holy Spirit."

NOTE C, p. 33.

Though there may be room for a difference of opinion as to the meaning of the phrase *born of the Spirit*, on account of the ambiguity of the word *πνευμα*, Spirit, in scriptural usage, Expositors, I believe, are agreed in referring the *being born of water* to the rite of baptism; "become one of my disciples by that baptismal regeneration by which your proselytes are said to become as infants new born." *Whitby*. "This spiritual birth, of which baptism with water is but the symbol, Christ again solemnly asserts to be necessary to fit a man for being a proper member of his kingdom in this world. There seems also in these words a reference to the manner in which this member of the Sanhedrim had come to him, which was by night. In opposition to this conduct, which discovered much timidity, Christ tells him that it was necessary to make a public profession of his religion by baptism." *Kenrick*. *Το ἰδωρ* est baptismus. *Rosenmüller*. "Be received by baptism to instruction, which, including in it a public profession of the faith of the persons baptized, was opposed to the secret manner of the visit of Nicodemus." *Cappe*.

NOTE D, p. 33.

There are three passages which must here be considered in connexion : John iii. 22, " After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea ; and there he tarried with them, and *baptized.*" iii. 26, " And they came to John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold *the same baptizeth,* and all men come to him." iv. 1, " When therefore the Lord knew the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and *baptized* more disciples than John, though Jesus *himself* baptized not, but his disciples." The qualification in this last verse is not, let it be remembered, a denial, but an explanation, of the report which had reached the ears of the Pharisees ; the negation applying not to the word *baptized*, but to the emphatic word (*αὐτὸς*) himself ; and the baptism by the hands of the disciples being such, that the historian himself who introduced the explanation had not hesitated to call it a baptism by Christ. It was virtually administered by Christ. The explanation related solely to the agent by whom it was administered. In regard, therefore, to the authority of Christ in favour of baptism, I can see no difference between the two cases.

NOTE E, p. 36.

The genuineness of Matt. xxviii. 19, latter clause, has been objected to upon such evidence, as, if admitted, would bring any part of Scripture under suspicion. No known manuscript or ancient version omits the words ; and the references to the passage by ancient writers are remarkably numerous. That the mode of expression in regard to baptism in the Acts of the Apostles, is different from that here used by our Lord, appears no good argument against the validity of the former clause, especially as there is no inconsistency between them—baptizing persons into the name of the Lord Jesus, necessarily including the belief that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit ; and he who made profession of that belief, by submission to bap-

tism, would be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The argument which this clause is thought by some to furnish in favour of the Athanasian hypothesis of the Trinity, I shall not here remark on; but I cannot but observe the singular fact that in the disputes about trine immersion, in Spain particularly, it was the Antitrinitarian party that were strenuous for the observance of that mode, while the Athanasians objected to it, as implying a more complete difference among the persons of the Trinity, than they seemed to have considered consistent with the doctrine of One God.

It has been doubted by some whether the phrase *παντα τα εθνη*, Matt. xxviii. 19, be correctly translated *all the nations*. This is, however, unquestionably the common sense of the words. See Matt. xxiv. 9; Luke xxi. 24, xxiv. 47; Acts x. 35, xiv. 16. Also a decisive usage of it in Dan. iii. 2, according to the LXX., printed at Rome, A. D. 1772. That the disciples do not at first appear to have understood the extent of our Saviour's commission, is no objection to its natural import, which the revelation to Peter (Acts x.) sufficiently disclosed.

NOTE F, p .36.

That our Lord connects baptism with belief, and does not repeat the mention of it in connexion with unbelief, is to be thus explained, that belief must in any case precede baptism. Baptism was, as it were, a supplement to belief; so that where there was no belief, there would of course be no baptism. A man would be reduced to a state of condemnation, (which I do not think specifically refers to punishment in the future world, but to the enjoyment of privileges and blessings in this,) not for the want of baptism, but for the want of belief. Having therefore declared, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved," it was unnecessary to add to the clause, "He that believeth not, or *is not baptized*, shall be condemned."

Christ was dividing those to whom the Gospel was to be

preached, viz. "all the world—every creature," into two great classes; those who believe and are baptized, and those who believe not. Now the division was illogical unless it exhausted the subject. It would be incomplete indeed, if there were to be still two other classes; such as believed without being baptized, and such as were baptized without believing. Although both these anomalies have arisen, and still actually exist, in the Christian world, Jesus is altogether silent upon them, and their salvation or condemnation. In short, in the two grand divisions which Jesus does state, it is evidently implied that he contemplated that all who did not come within the latter would be comprehended within the former of his two classes.

Note G, p. 41.

It has been latterly maintained (see Rev. R. Wright's pamphlet on the Perpetuity of Baptism), that baptism in the first age was confined to the Jewish believers in Christianity. But it is incumbent on the supporters of this novel opinion, to establish it by distinct evidence, proving that none among the thousands baptized in the apostolic age were Gentiles. It has been well observed,* the world makes a distinction between Jews and Gentiles; Christ made no such distinction.—I have looked in vain for a set of arguments on which this distinction can be supposed to rest, and not finding any to refute, I will here bring together such observations as appear to me to render such a distinction inadmissible. It is opposed,

1. By the legitimate meaning of our Lord's words, Matt. xxviii. 19, (*μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτούς*), "make disciples of (instruct) *all the nations*, baptizing them." The meaning is defined by Christ's words recorded by Luke, xxiv. 47, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem;" (*εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*), and by

* See Pool's Synopsis.

the words recorded by Mark (ch. xvi. 15), "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*;" and see Luke xii. 30.

2. By the case of Cornelius, (Acts x. 47, 48,) whom Peter instructed in the gospel, and which was afterwards represented by that Apostle as the first preaching of the gospel to *the Gentiles*, Acts xv. 7. This argument is so decisive, that the *spuriousness* of the passage relating to the baptism of Cornelius was lately advocated by one who was acute enough to perceive that if it were admitted to be genuine, (and no passage in the New Testament can have stronger external evidence in its favour,) it would be fatal to the hypothesis.

3. By the fact noticed, p. 40, that "many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized, after the historian had informed us of Paul's purpose to leave the Jews and go to the Gentiles; taken in connexion especially with the admission of the Apostle, (1 Cor. i. 13,) that the Corinthians had been baptized.

4. By the absence of any such distinction in the epistles addressed to churches composed of Jews and Gentiles. The single evidence derived from the words, "As many of you as have been baptized," rests at best on the English version, and if the original required this translation, the inference from it, that the believers who had not been baptized were Gentiles, would be perfectly gratuitous.

5. By the fact which defies refutation, that all the arguments for the expediency and propriety of the rite of baptism in the case of Jewish converts, will apply in equal, if not in greater, force to Gentiles.

Mr. Wright, Essay, p. 45, speaks of "Paul's general neglect of baptism in his ministry among the Gentiles;" a statement by no means warranted by the single fact, that of the members of the church at *Corinth*, 1 Cor. i. 14, he had baptized only a few. The opinion that baptism was confined in its apostolic use to Jews, or Jewish converts, accords very ill with the other opinion for which Mr.

Wright contends, that the Jews used baptism in the case of the conversion of proselytes. Admitting this somewhat doubtful opinion to be true, it would be in the highest degree improbable that the first missionaries, guided by the Jewish practice, applied it in the case of believers from their own nation, and also, perhaps, in the case of proselytes to Judaism, and yet neglected the use of it in the case of idolatrous Heathens when they were brought to Christ. For these last the rite must have been specially designed, and in their case it may be admitted to have been emblematical of the vast change which worshippers of dumb idols, 1 Cor. xii. 2, would have to undergo, when they were brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God. The argument derived from the employment of baptism in the case of proselytes to Judaism, is directly opposed to the opinion that the Christian rite was confined to Jewish converts, with which notion I believe few were acquainted, till A. D. 1827, when it was divulged by Mr. Wright. If the notion be contained in a single known exposition of the Acts or Epistles, I stand corrected.

With more plausibility the practice of the baptism of Jewish proselytes, supposing (contrary to the opinion of Dr. Lardner) that it can be traced up to a period as remote as the ministry of Christ, may be urged as an argument in favour of practising the Christian rite in every instance of a change of belief from other systems to Christianity; and in this view of the subject, without examination, I myself rested for some years. But it now appears to me that an important consideration is far too little kept in view, viz. *that we are all converts*, that we bring no religion into the world with us, and that there is no inconsiderable space of human life in which the child of a Jew, the child of a Heathen, and the child of a Christian, are on a perfect level with regard to *belief in Christ*; and why are the accidental differences of parentage, climate, prospect of education, &c., to produce a difference of practice in regard to a professedly Christian rite as to the administration of which

they, the authorized legislators, have made no distinction? But there is a large class of cases which may well illustrate this subject, and shew the importance of the principle now laid down. In what is commonly called the Christian world, there are great numbers who believe nothing of Christianity as a Divine Revelation, and many who even doubt the existence of Almighty God. Are *their* children "born Christians"? Can their offspring be considered the offspring of Christian parents? Yet, do those who object to the baptism of the children of Christians recommend it to be applied in these cases when Christianity is adopted? It may be said that such are in the way of hearing of Christianity, and this is true, but equally so in the case of thousands of Jews who became Christians in the apostolic age, and yet it is admitted that they were baptized, and that baptism was rightly applied to them *upon their belief in Christ*. This, this is the one simple, intelligible, reasonable principle of scripture, and to this we must return, or we shall lose ourselves in a labyrinth of error.—I will here introduce a few short extracts from a pamphlet on the Perpetuity of Baptism, by a late venerable minister and diligent scriptural student, Dr. Toulmin, which are confirmatory of the view of baptism which in this volume I have been advocating.

CONVERTS. "Baptism into the name of Christ was meant to signify faith in Christ; to express an acceptance of him as the promised Messiah, and the Saviour of the world. Is this any way peculiar to the case of converts? Is it only the duty of converts from another religion to confess Christ before men? Is it not the duty of their offspring also? By whatever means, or at whatever period of life, faith in his character is produced, is not the acknowledgment of it a personal duty? Doth not this primary idea of baptism comprehend every description of people whatever? What idea can be more general or comprehensive? It applies to no peculiar circumstances."—Dr. TOULMIN'S *Short Essay on Baptism*, p. 6.

After reckoning up the various cases of baptism recorded in the New Testament, the same writer continues :

“ These diversified cases establish one clear, precise, and general idea of the ordinance ; viz. its being a personal and solemn declaration of believing in Christ, without regard to any former religious profession, or to the time and manner of becoming a believer. This is an idea of its design, which shews that it is as properly and justly used by the descendants of converts from any other religion, as by those converts themselves. Nay, it may be said, that there is a greater propriety and force in it in the former, than in the latter case. The very going over from a long accustomed religion to Christianity, is an open and explicit avowal of faith in Christ, in the latter instance, without borrowing the aids of expression and signification from any ceremonial rite. But, in the former instance, it is not so evident that the same faith dwells in the child that dwelt in the parent, till, by a personal and explicit act, he shews that the profession of Christianity is voluntary, and not merely to be presumed in consequence of education ; the result of conviction and judgment, and not mere custom ; his own deed, and not involved merely in that of his parents. It is a solecism ; it is contrary to the analogies of former dispensations, and of human manners, that Christianity should be destitute of a rite to commence, while it is supplied with one to preserve and perpetuate, the profession of faith in its author. The Lord’s Supper is allowed to answer the latter ; baptism is adapted to the former purpose.”—P. 10.

JEWISH RITE. “ Should it be supposed that before this (viz. our Lord’s removal from the world) the rite of baptism was used only in compliance with the customs and temper of the Jews, among whom there prevailed a multitude of washings from legal impurities ; yet, after the resurrection, it wore a different appearance and importance : when he gave orders that it should be practised among *all* nations, and extended to *all* believers, and built these injunctions on a solemn declaration of his own authority in heaven and earth, it must cease to be looked upon as a Jewish rite, taken up in indulgence to the customs of that nation, when it was incorporated with the religion of Christ, and became

a universal and standing order of his religion. There is, indeed, nothing of a ritual nature so often mentioned in the New Testament, of which there are so many precedents and instances, and on which so many practical arguments and exhortations are founded. Christ's adoption of the rite makes it his."—P. 27.

TIME OF THE OBSERVANCE. "Should it be urged, that if our Lord intended that this ordinance should extend to the descendants of Christian parents, it might have been expected, that the time or period of life for submitting to it would have been fixed; the reply is, that no time could be fixed upon by command consistently with the nature and design of the act. It is a *voluntary* avowal of faith in Christ; it must, therefore, equally with the sentiment which it is designed to express, be left to arise from conviction, and from the spontaneous emotion of the mind. The time of this will depend upon the different degrees of information persons enjoy, upon the different dispositions of their minds with respect to God and the things of his kingdom, upon the nature of their education, and the various circumstances that have an influence upon the judgment and the heart."

NOTE H, p. 42.

When St. Paul (1 Cor. i. 14) says, "I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius," it would be perfectly illogical to infer that he had not baptized converts in other parts of his apostolical journeys. There is nothing against the supposition that the twelve persons who embraced Christianity after his special instruction at Ephesus, Acts xix. 5, were baptized by him or under his immediate sanction.

The declaration which St. Paul makes in this connexion, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel," has occasioned, it appears, extraordinary uneasiness to Mr. Richard Wright, the missionary (see his pamphlet on Baptism); but a slight attention to the very common idio-

matic comparative in the Hebrew language, might have removed his whole difficulty. I refer with pleasure in corroboration of my own view of the passage, to a short, but sensible and decisive, article in the *Christian Reformer*, Vol. XIV. p. 26, by a first-rate Critic, shortly after the publication of Mr. Wright's pamphlet.

“ If we consult the Christian Scriptures, we shall find that notices and recognitions of *baptism* are far more numerous than many persons imagine. Even the passages, and they are not a few, where the terms *baptism*, *baptize*, *baptized*, occur in a figurative sense, attest the existence of the literal rite; for who has ever found such allusive and metaphorical expressions become current, when they were not taken from acknowledged facts and practices? We must further admit that our Lord's assistants were in the habit of administering baptism to their successive converts. Jesus Christ, it is true, did not himself baptize; that his apostles baptized is clear from the evangelical history,* and from the narrators of their Acts, as well as from their Epistles; and though Paul declares that he was sent not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, we know, however, from his own statement, that in some instances he really did baptize; we know that if, in the majority of cases, he forbore to administer the rite, his forbearance arose from a fear, lest he should be said to have baptized into his own name. Can any exception better prove the rule to which it is an exception? Paul was sent not so much to baptize as to preach the gospel. It is a well-known scriptural idiom: ‘ I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;’ ‘ Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life.’ ” †

* “ John iv. 2.

† “ Tertullian on Baptism, c. xiv. Barclay, Apology, &c., Propos. xii., will not admit that Paul baptized ‘ by virtue of his apostolical commission, but rather in condescension to the weakness of the Jewish proselytes.’ Paul, however, is silent as to

See also Mr. Belsham's note on this passage, in his Exposition of Paul's Epistles.

"The writers of the Old and New Testament," says Bishop Pearce, "almost every where, agreeably to their Hebrew idiom, express a preference given to one thing before another, by an affirmation of the thing preferred, and a negation of the contrary." If the strict literal sense be insisted on in all such cases, what is to be made of Ananias not having lied unto men, but unto God? (Acts v. 4); or of Christ's declaration, (John xii. 44,) "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me"?

NOTE I, p. 42.

In St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, vi. 3, 4, the expressions occur, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are *buried* with him *by baptism* into death." It is the opinion both of Mr. Locke and Mr. Belsham, that this chapter relates exclusively to the heathen converts, and in that case it yields another proof that in the first age baptism was as universal as Christian belief. I can have no doubt that the allusion is here to the immersion of the body in water in token of receiving the Christian faith. And to the same act the apostle probably alludes when he speaks in the sixth verse of the same chapter, *of the old man* being crucified with Christ. Similar language is found in the Epistle to the Colossians, ii. 12, and iii. 10, 11, compared with Eph. iv. 22—24. Dr. Ryland, Candid Statement, p. 38, justly remarks, "Probably the custom of putting on *white* raiment after baptism (from which Whitsunday obtained its name, when baptism was chiefly administered at that period) is less ancient than the times of the apostles; but a change was always needful: and though some most respectable modern Pædobaptists seem very averse to admit any such *condescension* in the instances of Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas; and it will be safer for us to content ourselves with Paul's silence, than to acquiesce in Barclay's comment."

allusions to immersion, and the necessary change of raiment consequent upon it, in the passage just cited as well as in Rom. vi. 6, and Col. iii. 9, 10, yet concessions enough to fill a volume might be produced from their predecessors of every denomination, whom the force of truth constrains to acknowledge their evident reference to the primitive mode of administering this ordinance." I find from Schlichtingius on Eph. iv. 24, that he has no doubt of the reference being here to baptism.

In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. i. 13—17, the allusions to the disciples having been baptized, are too plain to admit of evasion. The argument arising from Paul's words, "Christ sent me not," &c., has been before noticed. Additional instances are ch. xii. 13, "We were all baptized into one body;" with which compare ch. xii. 2, "Ye know that ye were Gentiles," which proves that Gentile converts were baptized. 1 Cor. vi. 11, "But ye are washed," &c., is a clear reference to baptism, though a more general term is employed. xii. 13, though there is a difference of opinion among critics, appears to me decisively to prove the employment of baptism in water, and in reference to all classes of believers without distinction. "For by one" (see vers. 3, 9) "spirit have we all been baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free: and we have all been made to drink into one spirit."

In the Epistle to the Galatians (iii. 27) there is express mention of baptism. In that to the Ephesians (iv. 5) *one baptism* occupies its place in the enumeration of the Christian privileges, with the one hope, the one Lord, and the one God and Father of all; nor is there any room for the idea, that the one baptism is here the baptism of the spirit, because *the spirit* is expressly distinguished: see ver. 4. Nor can there remain a doubt, that baptism *in water* is alluded to elsewhere in this Epistle. Ch. v. 26, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

In the Epistle to Titus, ch. iii. 5, baptism is unquestion-

ably spoken of as the washing of regeneration. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the writer very distinctly mentions this Christian rite. Ch. x. 22, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts purified from an evil conscience, and *our bodies washed with pure water.*" See Schleusner on βαπτίζω.

NOTE K, p. 45.

"The primitive *manner* of baptizing was (usually at least) dipping or plunging the person under water. This is now so universally acknowledged on all hands, that there is no occasion to say much on this head. It will be sufficient to observe, that the Scripture speaks of persons being buried in baptism, (Rom. vi. 4,) of having their *bodies washed* with pure water, (Heb. x. 22,) and of water baptism as putting away the filth of the flesh, (1 Pet. iii. 21,) which expressions evidently allude to and suppose the dipping of the *whole body*, or the burying it under the water. Accordingly, the Christian churches continued the practice of baptizing by immersion (excepting in a case of necessity) through all ages, and in all countries, till of late. Nay, as far as I can find, it is still the practice of all the Christian churches in the world, excepting only the church of Rome, and those Protestant churches that came out of her."—HALLET'S *Notes on Texts of Scripture*, Vol. III. 355.

This is the opinion of GROTIUS, in himself a host.

Dr. Whitby, in his Commentary, admits the same.

Dr. Wall, in his controversy with Gale, makes the same admission; these two regret that the practice of the English church has been altered. There is to this day in the church of Cranbrook, in Kent, a baptistery suited to adults.

"The *Greek* word βαπτίζω, 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; nor do I know that any man has ever pretended to affix a different meaning to the word itself, or to its derivatives." GILBERT WAKEFIELD.

The Argument for Immersion from the Practice of the Greek Church.

“ If any thing were here wanting to constitute a complete demonstration in favour of our practice and way of thinking, we could appeal to the judgment and custom of the Greek Christians, who have always adhered to immersion : a plain and demonstrative proof that it must be the real and proper signification of the words expressive of baptism in their language. This ought to settle this controversy, and silence all future objections on this head ; for who can be so likely to know the meaning of Greek words as the Greeks themselves ? Or who so likely to know the true and proper meaning of those Greek words that relate to baptism as the Greek Christians, to whose mother tongue, or native language, those same words belong ? That they do not, and never did in their opinion, signify sprinkling or pouring, is certain, for they have never adopted such a practice. On the other hand, that they understand, and have always understood, immersion to be naturally and necessarily meant by those words, is equally certain ; for such has been their constant practice from generation to generation. This circumstance we ought never to overlook or forget, while combating the present objection, as it will apply effectually and decisively in support of our sentiment and practice, as well as against theirs. It surely must appear, if not providential, yet at least exceedingly remarkable, that the Greek Christians from age to age should adhere to this practice of immersion, without ever once attempting to lay aside or depart from the same, widely as they have departed from primitive Christianity in a multitude of other matters. How otherwise is it possible to account for this but by admitting that the Greek words expressive of this ordinance were so clearly and universally understood among the Greeks to signify immersion, that that practice could not be laid aside there for shame, or without insulting and offering violence to the common sense and common feelings of the people ? Inasmuch, then, as the Greeks, who must

have been the best judges in the world, considered immersion as the proper, native, legitimate meaning of the original Greek word for baptism, it must be allowed to be really so ; for in the face of such a well-known and undeniable fact, who can avoid admitting it without appearing blind to the clearest evidence and plainest proof, or a slave to the most unreasonable prejudice?"

Dr. RICHARDS'S Address on the Duration or Perpetuity of Christian Baptism, with some introductory Hints upon the Subjects and Mode of that Ordinance. LIFE by Dr. EVANS, p. 203.

APPENDIX I.

THE proverbially honest WHISTON wrote in favour of believers' baptism, and attributed the same opinion to Sir Isaac Newton and others.

“In the same year, 1712, I published a small pamphlet, intituled, *Primitive Infant Baptism Revived*: or, an Account of the Doctrine and Practice of the Two First Centuries concerning the *Baptism of Infants*, in the Words of the Sacred and Primitive Writers themselves. 8vo. Now, the occasion of my discovery of this ancient error of the baptism of uncatechized infants, was a question put to me by Mr. Shelswell, when I was preparing to baptize him and a sister of his, who were good Christians, excepting that they had never been baptized before, whether I should not think it were better if baptism were deferred till after instruction, than used before it? My answer was this, that I must honestly confess I should myself have thought so; but that I was no legislator, and so submitted to what I then took to be a law of Christ. Constitut. vi. 15, ‘Do you also baptize your infants, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of God? For,’ says he, ‘suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.’ When Mr. Shelswell was gone, I reflected upon what had been said, and was dissatisfied that I had been forced to allow, that in my opinion this law of Christ was not so right as it should be. Whereupon I immediately set myself to examine what the New Testament and the most early Fathers meant by the words which they used, when they speak of baptism of *infants* or *little children*, I

mean *νήπια* and *παιδιά*, and which they esteemed not incapable of that holy ordinance. And I soon discovered that they were only those that were capable of catechetic instruction, but not fit for understanding harder matters ; and that none but such *infants* and *little children* were ever in the first and second century made partakers of baptism. This most important discovery I soon communicated to the world in this paper, which both Bishop Hoadley and Dr. Clarke greatly approved, but still went on in the ordinary practice notwithstanding. I sent this paper also, by an intimate friend, Mr. [Hopton] Haines, to Sir Isaac Newton, and desired to know his opinion. The answer returned was this, that they both had discovered the same before. Nay, I afterwards found that Sir Isaac Newton was so hearty for the Baptists, as well as for the Eusebians or Arians,* that he sometimes suspected these were the two witnesses in the revelation.”—*Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mr. W. Whiston*, Vol. I. p. 206.

Whitaker, the author of “*The Origin of Arianism Disclosed*,” page 458, quoting the last sentence, exclaims, “Such a wild Arian was he !” I suppose this was the first time that the epithet “wild” was ever applied to the matured judgment of our immortal philosopher.

II.

THE following extract from *Dr. James Foster*, on “*The Usefulness and Truth of the Christian Revelation*,” is taken from the fifth chapter of his work, which contains “*A Particular Vindication of the Peculiar Positive Institutions of Christianity*.”

* There is evidence to shew that Sir Isaac Newton, if he now believed in the pre-existence of Christ, afterwards rejected that doctrine. See Mr. Lindsey’s *Sequel*, p. 19.

“ By *baptism* we voluntarily, and in the most solemn manner, make a profession of the Christian religion ; and as it is done freely, and from choice, we necessarily oblige ourselves by this action to imitate the life of Christ, and govern our temper and behaviour by the rules he has prescribed, i. e. to copy after the most perfect example, and practise the most entire, generous, and useful virtue, that was ever prescribed by any scheme of philosophy, or institution of religion. We oblige ourselves to that rational piety, impartial justice, universal, disinterested, and condescending goodness, and strict temperance, which Christianity so clearly recommends and powerfully enforces ; expecting, upon these terms only, the favour of Almighty God and a happy immortality. And can any thing be more becoming rational beings, than to bring themselves under the strictest obligations to promote the true dignity and perfection of their nature, and the general good of their fellow-creatures ?

“ If it be said, that our very profession of the Christian religion obliges us to all this, without the use of any particular rite or ceremony, I am sure, that doing it by a solemn rite, and in a public manner, will be an additional motive with all who have a sense of ingenuousness, to perform their voluntary engagements ; that the doing it in a way appointed by God, and in obedience to his command, has a natural tendency to make them more sincere in their resolutions, give them a more lively sense of their obligations, and leave a deeper impression upon the mind. And besides, by appointing a particular rite, and making it men’s duty to submit to it, every man is put at his first setting out in religion, upon examining the evidence of it, and the different natures and consequences of virtue and vice, by which means his religion will become a matter of free and deliberate choice. For though the bulk of mankind go on in the beaten track, and because they are never called upon

to make a particular inquiry, take their religion implicitly, just as the chance of education and custom directs; yet one would imagine that when they are bound, by a ceremony instituted on purpose, to make a solemn profession of it, this should always suggest to them, that now is the proper time to consider seriously upon what foundation it stands, and the reasons by which it is supported; and whatever the real fact be, I am sure it is the natural tendency of the thing, and therefore it must be calculated in itself to answer the most useful purposes; because nothing can be of greater importance towards making men fixed and steady in a virtuous course, than their entering upon it after mature deliberation and a full conviction of the judgment.

“ And if these are the uses of some particular rite, it will be a sufficient justification of any single one, that it is as fit as any other, and does not interfere with the main design of the institution. This, I say, is as much as can, in strict reason, be required. But, beyond this, it may be urged in favour of *baptism*, the initiatory ceremony of the Christian religion, that it is itself the most natural and significant that can be, and expressive of those very obligations which we bring ourselves under by submitting to it. This is strongly represented by St. Paul, in the following passage (if we understand by baptism the rite that was originally appointed, and always practised in the first Christian churches, viz. *immersion*; otherwise, indeed, the beauty and force of the comparison is entirely lost): ‘ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore are we 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.’ Rom. vi. 3, 4.

“ I need not set myself to prove, that this is a rite which may generally be practised without inconvenience, and,

consequently, is fit to be enjoined in a religion designed for all ages and nations, because the constant experience of those who use it, adhering strictly to the original institution, is a most convincing demonstration of this: amongst whom, notwithstanding some instances of a precipitate and incautious zeal, it scarce ever is, and, if but common prudence were exercised, we have the utmost reason to believe never would at all be, attended with ill consequences; and, besides, an attempt of this kind would be trifling with the reader, in an age in which the practice of *cold-bathing* is so frequently recommended even to the most tender constitutions, and acknowledged to have such excellent effects.

“ Upon the whole, there is every circumstance in this positive institution of Christianity that can recommend it, and manifest the great wisdom and goodness of God in appointing it. The general design of it is to oblige Christians, in the most solemn manner, to a conduct that is becoming rational creatures, conducive to the rectitude of human nature, and the good of society, viz. to abstain from vice and impurity of all kinds, and practise the most universal, constant, and amiable virtue. The fixing a particular rite is of great use to engage their attention, and give them a stronger sense of their obligations, and, as it binds all to a voluntary and deliberate engagement, to lead a sober, righteous, and godly life. As the substance of the duty, or the principal thing intended by it, must always be useful, the external ceremony itself is of that kind, as may generally be practised, not only without inconvenience, but with advantage, and is withal very natural and significant, and wisely adapted to the main design. To which we may add, that there is the utmost care to prevent superstitious abuses of it, not only by asserting in general the utter insignificancy of all instituted means without real virtue and goodness, and constantly inculcating the moral use

of this particular institution ; but by declaring in express terms, that it is not the external part of baptism, ‘ putting away the filth of the flesh,’ for which we are considered as good Christians, and entitled to the reward of eternal life, but ‘ the answer of a good conscience towards God.’ 1 Pet. iii. 21.” Dr. James Foster “ On the Usefulness and Truth of the Christian Revelation,” chap. v.—And see some excellent remarks in Marsom’s *Perpetuity of Christian Baptism* (1828), pp. 68—74.

III.

JOHN MILTON ON BAPTISM.

(From his *Treatise of Christian Doctrine*, chap. xxviii.)

“ UNDER the gospel, the first of the Sacraments, commonly so called, is baptism, wherein the bodies of believers who engage themselves to pureness of life, are immersed in running water,* to signify their regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and their union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

* “ *In profluentem aquam.* By the admission of this word into the definition, it is evident that Milton attributed some importance to this circumstance, probably considering that the superior purity of running water was peculiarly typical of the thing signified. Hence it appears that the same epithet employed in *Paradise Lost*, in a passage very similar to the present, is not merely a poetical ornament.

..... Them who shall believe,
 Baptizing *in the profluent stream*, the sign
 Of washing them from guilt of sin to life,
 Pure, and in mind prepared, if so befall,
 For death, like that which the Redeemer died.

XII. 441.”—Note by Dr. Sumner.

“Of believers. Matt. xxviii. 19, ‘Teach all nations, baptizing them.’ Mark xvi. 15, 16, ‘Preach the gospel—he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.’ Acts viii. 36, 37, ‘What doth hinder me to be baptized? If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest.’ Eph. v. 26, ‘That he might cleanse it [the church] with the washing of water by the word.’ 1 Pet. iii. 21, ‘The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.’

“Hence it follows, that infants are not to be baptized, inasmuch as they are incompetent to receive instruction, or to believe, or to enter into a covenant, or to promise or answer for themselves, or even to hear the word. For how can infants who understand not the word be purified thereby, any more than adults can receive edification by hearing an unknown language? For it is not that outward baptism, which purifies only the filth of the flesh, that saves us, but the answer of a good conscience, as Peter testifies, of which infants are incapable.* Besides, baptism is not merely a covenant, containing a certain stipulation on one side, with a corresponding engagement on the other, which in the case of an infant is impossible; but it is also a vow, and as such can neither be pronounced by infants nor required of them. See Book ii. ch. iv. under the head of Vows.†

* Dr. Sumner, the English translator of Milton’s Work, here refers for an answer to this argument to Wall’s Defence of his History of Infant Baptism, p. 243, and Whitby on Matt. iii. 16. Let the reader consult both these references. I have, and my judgment remains unshaken that Milton is right.

† In that passage Milton says, “Neither can a general or special vow be made by one who has not yet arrived at the full use of his judgment. Considering how generally this rule was

“It is remarkable to what futile arguments those divines have recourse, who maintain the contrary opinion. They allege Matt. xix. 14, ‘Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ It appears, however, that they were not brought to him for the purpose of being baptized: ver. 13, ‘Then were there brought to him little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray;’ neither did Christ baptize them, but only put his hands on them, ver. 15. Mark x. 16, ‘He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.’ Seeing, then, that they were neither brought to Christ to be baptized, nor, when received, were actually baptized by him, it is impossible to admit the sophistical inference, that they were properly qualified for baptism, or, which is still more difficult to conceive, that not little children merely, but infants are so qualified. For if competent to be baptized, they are competent on the same grounds to be partakers of the Lord’s Supper. Let the church, therefore, receive infants which come unto her, after the example of Christ, with imposition of hands and benediction, but not with baptism. Again, they remind us that of such is the kingdom of heaven. Is this to be understood of all without distinction, or only of such as shall subsequently believe? How perfectly soever God may know them that are his, the church does not know them; what they are in the sight of God is one thing, and what they are by church privilege is another. It must mean, therefore, *of such* in respect of simplicity and innocence, whereas neither simplicity nor innocence, although they may be predicated of little children, can properly be attributed to infants, who have not as yet

received among divines, it is strange that they should so far forget their own doctrine, as to require the special vow of baptism from infants.”

the faculty of reason; neither does it follow that because any one is an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, he is therefore admissible to every religious sacrament; or that because he is included in the covenant, he has therefore the right of participating in such signs and seals of that covenant as demand the exercise of mature faith and reason. For the thing signified in the Supper of the Lord, appertains no less to infants than the thing signified in baptism; and yet infants are not admitted to the former rite, although they were admitted to the passover, which held the same place in the former dispensation as the Lord's Supper in the present. Hence, by the way, we may perceive how weak it is to reason as follows: baptism has succeeded to circumcision; but infants were circumcised, therefore infants are to be baptized: seeing that it is equally certain that the Lord's Supper has succeeded to the passover, notwithstanding which infants, who were admitted to the latter rite, are not admitted to the former.

“They argue again, that as it is said we were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 1 Cor. x. 2, infants must be included in the general expression. I answer, that all did eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink, iii. 4, yet that infants are not on this ground admitted to partake of the Lord's Supper.

“They lay much stress likewise on Gen. xvii. 7, ‘I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations.’ No one, however, will seriously affirm, that this is to be understood of infants, and not of the adult posterity of Abraham in their generations, that is, successively. Otherwise we must suppose that God intended to give the land also to infants, ver. 18, and that infants are commanded to keep the covenant, ver. 9. Again, Acts ii. 39, ‘The promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many

as the Lord our God shall call.' Your children, that is, as they understand it, your infants: in other words, God calls those who cannot understand, and addresses those who cannot hear; an interpretation which can only have proceeded from the infancy of reasoning. Had these commentators but read two verses farther, they would have found it expressly stated, they that gladly received his word were baptized; whence it appears that understanding and will were necessary qualifications for baptism, neither of which is possessed by infants. So also Acts viii. 37, 'If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest be baptized;' whereas infants, so far from believing with all their heart, are incapable of even the slightest degree of faith. With regard, however, to the text on which they insist so much, 'The promise is to you, and to your children,' if they had attended sufficiently to Paul's interpretation of this passage, Rom. ix. 7, 8, they would have understood that the promise was not to all seed indiscriminately, seeing that it was not even to the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, but only to the children of God, that is, to believers, who alone under the gospel are the children of the promise, and are counted for the seed. But none can be considered by the church as believers, till they have professed their belief. To those, therefore, to whom it does not appear that the promise was ever made, the church cannot with propriety give the seal of the promise in baptism.

“Again, they allege the analogy between baptism and circumcision, which latter was performed on infants. Col. ii. 11, 'In whom also 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.' In the first place, there is no other analogy between being circumcised and being buried with him in baptism, than that which exists among all sacraments, by which the same thing is signified, the mode of

signification being different. But, secondly, why is it necessary that things which are analogous should coincide in all points? Of circumcision, for instance, women were not partakers; in baptism they are equally included with men, whether as being a more perfect sign, or a symbol of more perfect things. For circumcision, although a seal of the righteousness of faith, Rom. iv. 11, 12, was such only to Abraham, who being uncircumcised had already believed, and to others who should believe in like manner; not to his posterity, who in after times were circumcised before they were of an age to exercise faith, and who consequently could not believe in the uncircumcision. To them it was a seal in the flesh, indistinctly and obscurely given, of that grace which was at some distant period to be revealed; whereas baptism is a seal of grace already revealed, of the remission of sins, of sanctification; finally, a sign of our death and resurrection with Christ. Circumcision was given under the law and the sacrifices, and bound the individual to the observance of the whole law, (Gal. v. 3,) which was a service of bondage, and a school-master to bring its followers to Christ; through baptism, on the other hand, we are initiated into the gospel, which is a reasonable, manly, and, in the highest sense, free service. For under the law men were not merely born, but grew up infants in a spiritual sense; under the gospel, in baptism, we are born men. Hence baptism requires, as from adults, the previous conditions of knowledge and faith; whereas in circumcision all conditions are omitted, as unnecessary in the case of servants, and impracticable in that of infants. Lastly, circumcision was performed, not by the priests and Levites, but by the master of a family, Gen. xvii., by the mother, Ex. iv. 26, or by any other person, a surgical operation for instance; whereas baptism, according to our opponents themselves, can only be administered by a teacher of the gospel; and even those who

hold a wider opinion upon the subject, allow that it can only be performed by a believer, and by one who is neither a new convert, nor unlearned in the faith. To what purpose is this, unless that the person to be baptized may be previously instructed in the doctrines of the gospel ? which in the case of an infant is impossible. There is, therefore, no necessary analogy between circumcision and baptism ; and it is our duty not to build our belief on vague parallels, but to attend exclusively to the institution of the sacrament itself, and regard its authority as paramount, according to the frequent admonition of our opponents themselves.

“ They contend, however, that circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith, Rom. iv. 11, 12, notwithstanding which infants were circumcised who were incapable of belief. I answer as above, that it was indeed the seal of the righteousness of faith, but only to Abraham, and to such as, after his example, believed, being yet uncircumcised ; in the case of infants it was a thing of entirely different import, namely, an outward and merely national consecration to the external service of God, and, by implication, to the Mosaic form of worship, which was in due time to be ordained. Lastly, it is urged that the apostles baptized whole families, and consequently infants among the rest. The weakness of this argument is clearly shewn by Acts viii. 12, ‘ When they believed they were baptized, both men and women,’ infants not being included. xvi. 31—34, ‘ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house ; and they spake to him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house ; and he took them—and was baptized, he and all his straight-way—and he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.’ Here the expression *all his house*, obviously comprehends only those who believed in his house, not infants ; therefore those alone unto whom they spake the word of the Lord, and who believed, were baptized. The

same is evident from ch. xi. 17, 'Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift, as he did unto us who believe.' xviii. 8, 'Crispus believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.' Even the baptism of John, which was but the prelude to that of Christ, is called the baptism of repentance, Mark i. 4; and those who came to it were baptized, confessing their sins, Matt. iii. 6, whereas infants are incapable either of repentance or confession. If, then, infants were not meet for the baptism of John, how can they be meet for the baptism of Christ, which requires knowledge, repentance, and faith, before it can be received?

"IMMERSION. It is in vain alleged by those who, on the authority of Mark vii. 4, Luke xi. 38, have introduced the practice of affusion in baptism instead of immersion, that to dip and to sprinkle, mean the same thing; since in washing, we do not sprinkle the hands, but immerse them.

"*To signify their regeneration.* John iii. 5, 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;' that is, if the omission proceed from neglect. Acts xxii. 16, 'Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' Eph. v. 26, 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word.' Tit. iii. 5, 'By the washing of regeneration.'

"*Union with Christ in his death, &c.* 1 Cor. xii. 13, 'By one Spirit* are we baptized into one body.' Gal. iii. 27, 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.' Rom. vi. 3, 'Know ye not

* Literally, in one Spirit—*εν ἑνι πνευματι.*

that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.' Col. ii. 12, 'Buried with him in baptism.' Hence it appears that baptism was intended to represent figuratively the painful life of Christ, his death and burial, in which he was immersed, as it were, for a season: Mark x. 38, 'Can ye be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' Compare also Luke xii. 50." Respecting the administration of baptism, see chap. xxix.—on the visible church, and chap. xxxi. on particular churches.

In the former of these places, Milton says — "If, therefore, it be competent to any believer whatever to preach the gospel, provided he be furnished with the requisite gifts, it is also competent to him to administer the rite of baptism; inasmuch as the latter office is inferior to the former. John iv. 2, 'Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.' 1 Cor. i. 17, 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.' Hence Ananias, who was a disciple, baptized Paul, Acts ix. 10, 18; x. 48, 'He commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord;' which command was given to the companions of Peter, who are only called brethren, v. 23, and they which believed, ver. 45. And if it be true that baptism has succeeded to the place of circumcision, and bears the analogy to it which is commonly supposed, why should not any Christian whatever (provided he be not a mere novice, and therefore otherwise incompetent) be qualified to administer baptism, in the same manner as any Jew was qualified to perform the rite of circumcision? The baptism of John was essentially the same as the baptism of Christ; but it differed in the form of words used in its administration, and in the comparative remoteness of its efficacy. If it had not been really the same, it would follow that we had not undergone the same baptism as Christ,

that our baptism had not been sanctified by the person of Christ, that Christ had not fulfilled all righteousness, Matt. iii. 15 ; finally, that the apostles would have needed to be re-baptized, which we do not read to have been the case. In some respects, however, there was a difference ; for although both baptisms were from God,* and both required repentance and faith,† these requisites were less clearly propounded in the one case than in the other, and the faith required in the former instance was an imperfect faith, founded on a partial manifestation of Christ ; in the latter, it was a faith in a fully-revealed Saviour. The baptism of Christ was also administered with a more solemn form of words, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, (although it is no where said, that this form was ever expressly used by the apostles,) and attended, as above observed, with a more immediate efficacy ; inasmuch as the baptism of John was with water only,‡ except in the single instance of Christ, the design of which exception was not to prove the virtue of John's baptism, but to bear testimony to the Son of God. Hence the apostles did not receive the Holy Ghost till a much later period, Acts i. 5, and the Ephesians, who had been baptized with the baptism of John, had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost, xix. 1, 2 ; whereas the baptism of Christ, which was with water and the Spirit, conferred the gifts of the Spirit from the very beginning.

“ It is usually replied, that in the places where the baptism of John is said to be with water only, it is not intended to oppose the baptism of John to baptism with water and the Spirit, but to distinguish between the part which Christ acts in baptism, and that of the mere minister of the rite. If, however, this were true, the same distinction would be

* “ Luke iii. 2, 3, vii. 29, 30. † Acts xix. 4, 5.

‡ “ Matt. iii. 11 ; John i. 33 ; Acts i. 5, xix. 2.

made with respect to other ministers of baptism, the apostles for instance, which is not the case; on the contrary, it is abundantly evident that the apostles baptized both with water and the Holy Spirit.

“Considering, therefore, that the baptism of John either did not confer the gifts of the Spirit at all, or not immediately, it would appear to have been rather a kind of initiatory measure or purification, preparatory to receiving the doctrine of the gospel, in conformity with the ancient Hebrew custom, that all proselytes should be baptized, than an absolute sealing of the covenant; for this latter is the province of the Spirit alone. 1 Cor. xii. 13.

“Hence it appears that the baptism of Christ, although not indispensable, might, without impropriety, be super-added to the baptism of John; Acts xix. 5, ‘When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus;’ those, namely, who had already been baptized by John, ver. 3. I have said, not indispensable, inasmuch as the apostles, and many others, appear to have rested in the baptism of John; according to which analogy I should be inclined to conclude, that those persons who have been baptized while yet infants, and perhaps in other respects irregularly, have no need of second baptism when arrived at maturity; indeed, I should be disposed to consider baptism itself as necessary for proselytes alone, and not for those born in the church, had not the apostle taught that baptism is not merely an initiatory rite, but a figurative representation of our death, burial, and resurrection, with Christ.

“Previously to the promulgation of the Mosaic law, Noah’s ark was the type of baptism: 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21, ‘While the ark was a preparing, &c., the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.’ Under the law it was typified by the cloud: 1 Cor. x. 2, ‘All our fathers were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.’”

In the succeeding part of the chapter, under the head of *the Lord's Supper*, Milton makes some additional remarks on the Sacraments generally, from which a few short passages may be extracted. "When it is said, John iii. 5, 'Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,' this must be understood in a conditional sense, assuming that a fit opportunity has been offered, and that it has not been lost through neglect." P. 444. "The Sacraments are not to be approached without self-examination and renunciation of sin." — "The neglect, or the improper celebration of the Sacraments, equally provokes the indignation of the Deity.— Hence it is not only allowable, but necessary, to defer partaking in them, till such time as a proper place and season, purity of heart and life, and a regular communion of believers, concur to warrant their celebration." P. 447.

IV.

Practical Observations in Refutation of some Miscellaneous Objections.

[I shall here present to my readers an article which has been kindly furnished to me by a friend, on whose judgment, accuracy, and consistency, I place the fullest reliance. It will be considered, therefore, that I am entitled to no credit for the excellent observations which follow, any farther than as I am the medium through which they are made public.]

<p><i>Obj.</i> I have already so long professed myself, and been known as, a Christian, that the institution can have</p>	<p><i>Ans.</i> This is justifying the omission by the omission. Had it been left for each individual to speculate upon the</p>
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no application to me. applicability of the ordinance to his own particular case, the persons who most need its influence, would probably be the foremost to evade its obligation. The practical wisdom, therefore, of the Institutor, is exhibited in making the ordinance obligatory upon all.

That no man shall take advantage of his own wrong, is as sound a maxim in morals as in law; and though lateness of compliance may deprive the ordinance of some of its significance, it will evince the individual's resolution, that if he cannot do all he ought, he will do all he can.

This argument for continued disobedience from the length of past neglect, can at most only furnish a personal excuse. It admits the general obligation, and the individual availing himself of it ought at least to avow himself a Baptist in *principle*, and do his best to save others from bringing themselves into the same anomalous situation with himself. But the taunt, "Physician heal thyself," to which his efforts would be necessarily exposed, might well excite in his mind some misgiving as to the validity of his own exemption.

Obj. If I do not see it my duty, my non-compliance will be innocent. *Ans.* This plea, from the mouth of a sincere inquirer, who, after using all the means of information within his reach, may fail to perceive the obligation of the ordinance, is respected by none more highly than by the Baptist. At the same time, let it be kept in mind that the blind are excused not because they *do* not see, but because they *cannot* see, and that if there be any who shut their eyes in order *not* to see, they do so at their peril, and must be responsible for all they might have seen if they had kept their eyes open.

Obj. Baptism is unimportant in comparison with moral duty.

Ans. There must be degrees of importance even among moral duties, and by this rule we may discard every duty that is not absolutely at the top of the scale. There is a further fallacy in overlooking that a positive institution, if enjoined by competent authority, *is* a moral duty, and a wilful neglect of its known requirements an actual *immorality*.

Obj. If I lead a good life, my omission of baptism cannot endanger my salvation.

Ans. The same argument applied to each individual duty in succession, would in the end get rid of all. A life can only be good or bad, as the preponderating character of the several acts or motives of which it is made up may be virtuous or vicious : and who can say but that in his own case the wilful neglect of the ordinance in question may be the very circumstance to turn the scale against him ? It is the last feather that breaks the horse's back. What individual has such a redundancy of goodness that he can afford thus to set his virtues and vices in Debtor and Creditor array against each other, and to risk his salvation on the difference ? Seeing, besides, that it is on the Divine mercy that our hopes must, after all, depend, where is the prudence or gratitude of thus estimating to a fraction on *how little* we may be saved, and "continuing in sin that grace may abound" ?

But does not this pretext for continued neglect amount to saying, "Though I saw it my duty, I would not comply" ? And, incredible as it may appear, such, to the writer's knowledge, have been the expressions of individuals who would have been shocked to hear their Christianity questioned. To persons prepared to go this length,

the simple answer is, that *they* are premature in discussing the obligation of Christian baptism at all—since, so far from being *bound*, they are not so much as *qualified* to receive an ordinance, by which the believer avows himself a disciple of Christ, and expresses his resolution to do whatsoever he has commanded.

Obj. It is a frivolous external ceremony—a worn-out superstition—a worthless, uninteresting question.

presumptive inference, are to nullify all the direct evidence, not only which does exist, but also which may by possibility be conceived to exist, in support of the historical fact,—the question still returns, Is it or not, a duty *enjoined* on us? If enjoined, what Christian shall apply these opprobrious epithets? If not enjoined, what Baptist seeks to enforce its obligation?

Ans. Unless the objector's *à priori* speculations on the moral character of the ordinance, inducing, if correct,

no more than a mere presumptive inference, are to nullify all the direct evidence, not only which does exist, but also which may by possibility be conceived to exist, in support of the historical fact,—the question still returns, Is it or not, a duty *enjoined* on us? If enjoined, what Christian shall apply these opprobrious epithets? If not enjoined, what Baptist seeks to enforce its obligation?

Obj. It has no moral value or utility.

of representing the question as respecting only an outward ceremony—a ritual observance. That any ceremony, simply as such, and without an ulterior object, *can* form part of Christianity, none would be more loth to admit than the intelligent Baptist. It is, however, not a mere question of water. The real question is, whether Christ has not enjoined a specific act by which each individual, after the free exercise of his own judgment, shall voluntarily and unequivocally declare his conviction of the truth of the Gospel, and his resolution to regulate his life by its precepts. It is on the reality of this conviction, on the sincerity of this resolution, that the practical influence of reli-

Ans. The grand fallacy pervading more or less all the foregoing objections is that

gion upon individual conduct and character must mainly depend—and those objects cannot be more effectually attained than by an institution leading each individual to look forward to a specific, unambiguous act, which shall definitively indicate that such conviction has been attained—such resolution formed. It is in furnishing this specific act—in embodying the right and duty of private judgment—in giving time, place, and circumstance, to what would otherwise be a mere mental operation, and but for such external expression might never perhaps be performed at all, that the obvious utility of Christian baptism consists.

To say, as some do, that the Lord's Supper may be made to answer all these beneficial purposes, is admitting the principle, and only differing about the mode. But a particular mode having been prescribed by Christ, no other can afford such a recognition of his authority as that appropriated by himself, and to persist in substituting for that mode another of our own selection, is not easily distinguishable from disobedience for disobedience' sake. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

To the influence of baptism upon moral character a stronger testimony could scarcely be offered than was involuntarily rendered by an otherwise estimable individual, who declared in conversation, that were he convinced of the obligation, he would not be baptized, inasmuch as on every subsequent impropriety of conduct, he should have his baptism rising up in accusation against him.

Christianity is pre-eminently a religion of the understanding—and a more effectual preservative of its original purity could scarcely have been devised, than an institution which provided that the grounds on which this religion rests its claims on our acceptance, should be presented to the deliberate judgment of every individual seeking to bear its name. But "an infant asks no questions:" hence

the previous degradation of baptism from its original intellectual character, and its perversion into an engine of mental slavery,* were indispensably necessary to make way for ecclesiastical usurpation, and all the consequent corruptions of Christian truth.

Were the baptismal institution correctly understood and generally acted on, its waters would become the *Rubicon* of Christianity. Many who now, for want of a specific motive to quicken or induce decision, remain timid and irresolute, or oscillate betwixt nominal belief and practical doubt, must, in such a case, abandon their present ambiguous position. Christianity would acquire strength, not only by its purification from those merely born and bred Christians, whose nominal adherence adds only weakness—not only by the conversion into intelligent, consistent believers of those whose desultory inquiries now leave them half-convinced and half-resolved—but also by the increased decision of character and consequent advance in knowledge and virtue of all its real professors. All, too, who should have thus deliberately and intrepidly asserted in their own case the right of private judgment, would, in so doing, have pledged themselves to the most uncompromising hostility to human creeds, and every usurpation of authority, from whatever quarter, over liberty of conscience.

* Witness the following in our National Catechism :

Quest. Dost thou not think that thou art *bound* to believe and to do, as they [the godfather and godmother] have promised for thee ?

Ans. Yes, verily ; and by God's help, so I will.

* * * *

Quest. Why then are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them [i. e. repentance and faith, the conditions] ?

Ans. Because they promise them both, by their sureties : which promise, when they come to age, themselves are *bound* to perform.

POSTSCRIPT.

The following particulars may be deemed by some of the readers of this volume as important, although a suitable place for the introduction of them has not before been presented.

Dr. Priestley did not believe that baptism was a substitute for circumcision. *Works*, by RUTT, XX. pp. 470, 526.

Mr. Belsham granted that “the New Testament contains no express testimony for infant baptism, and exhibits no example of the practice.”—*Plea for Infant Baptism*, p. 51.

The learned Catholics grant that the baptism of babes, as well as the doctrine of Trinity-in-Unity, cannot be proved from the Scriptures alone. See the authorities cited in a valuable paper in the *Christian Moderator*, and the Last Sentiments of the learned Dr. COURAYER (1787), pp. 68, 71.

The Polish Unitarians, in the sixteenth century, were, in general, Baptists. See a very interesting account of their sentiments on this head in Dr. REES' *Racovian Catechism*, pp. 253, &c.

“The Reformation was introduced into Transylvania by Unitarian Baptists.”—ROBINSON'S *Ecclesiast. Researches*, p. 630.

Wegscheider (ranked by Dr. Parr among learned Unitarians) has written sensibly on the subject of Christian Baptism, and in favour of its perpetuity, though his reason dissents from the application of baptism, *believers' baptism*, to babes.—*Institutiones Theologicae*, Halæ, 1819, p. 409.

Many, if not all, of the first English Unitarians were Baptists. Of these, Joan Boucher, a lady of Kent, suffered death for her religious opinions, at Aldington, near Hythe,

A. D. 1549; and Edward Wightman, the last English Martyr, was burnt at Litchfield, April 11, 1612.

It has not come within the scope or limits of this volume to enter upon the argument from ecclesiastical history. But it would be important for those who wish to make that part of the argument their study, to consider, in corroboration of the fact mentioned in Appendix I., that the Greek word *παῖς*, which enters into combination in *Pædobaptist*, was applicable to a young person even of seventeen years of age. See XENOPHON'S *Cyropædia*. Its usage is very similar to that of *puer* among the Romans. The diminutive *παιδίον* is applied in the Gospel (Mark v. 39, 40), to a girl of twelve years of age.

See ROBINSON'S very learned and interesting *History of Baptism*, 1790, and his *Ecclesiastical Researches*, 1792.

TERTULLIAN was regarded by Mr. Belsham (*Plea for Infant Baptism*, p. 16) as furnishing decisive evidence in favour of infant baptism, being in his time, viz. the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, "a general or rather a universal practice." But there is an important word used by Tertullian, which I cannot but suppose that Mr. Belsham did not sufficiently take into account. The following is Mr. Belsham's own translation (*Plea*, p. 14): "Therefore, according to every one's condition, and disposition, and also age, the delaying of baptism is more profitable, *especially* (*præcipuè*) in the case of little children." Here it is to be observed that the baptism of children is only one of the cases. What were the others?

For a particular examination of the several objections to the Perpetuity of Baptism, I would refer to Dr. GALE'S *Sermons*, Vol. II. No. 5—11.

The *Four Lectures* at Worship Street, in the year 1826, and Mr. MARSOM'S *Answer to Mr. Wright*, it cannot be necessary for me to specify or recommend.

See a valuable paper, entitled “Metaphorical Baptism Disproved,” prefixed to the Monthly Repository for Nov. 1826; also, an interesting, and to me quite satisfactory, letter, in favour of the perpetuity of the baptismal ordinance, by Dr. DODDRIDGE, in his recently published *Letters, &c.*, Vol. II. pp. 342—349.

The objection of Emlyn has been left unnoticed in this volume for the reason given by honest Whiston in the following extract :

“As to my great friend Mr. *Emlyn's* Previous Questions about baptism, it is written with great acuteness *ad hominem*, as we say, but seems to me destitute of all real foundation; the authority of the Talmud, and the modern Rabbins, no way deserving any regard, when they not only are unsupported, but contradicted by all other genuine evidence. Nor do I believe any such baptism of proselytes till John the Baptist.” See a Letter to Mr. John Depee, near Coslany Bridge, Norwich, April 20, 1738, in WHISTON'S *Memoirs*, Vol. I.

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