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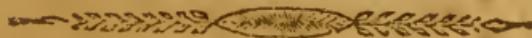
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A
SECOND INQUIRY,
I N T O
THE NATURE AND DESIGN
O F
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

Intended as a *Vindication* and further *Illustration*, of
the Sentiments advanced in a former *Inquiry*, on
the same subject.

By Cyprian Strong, A. M.

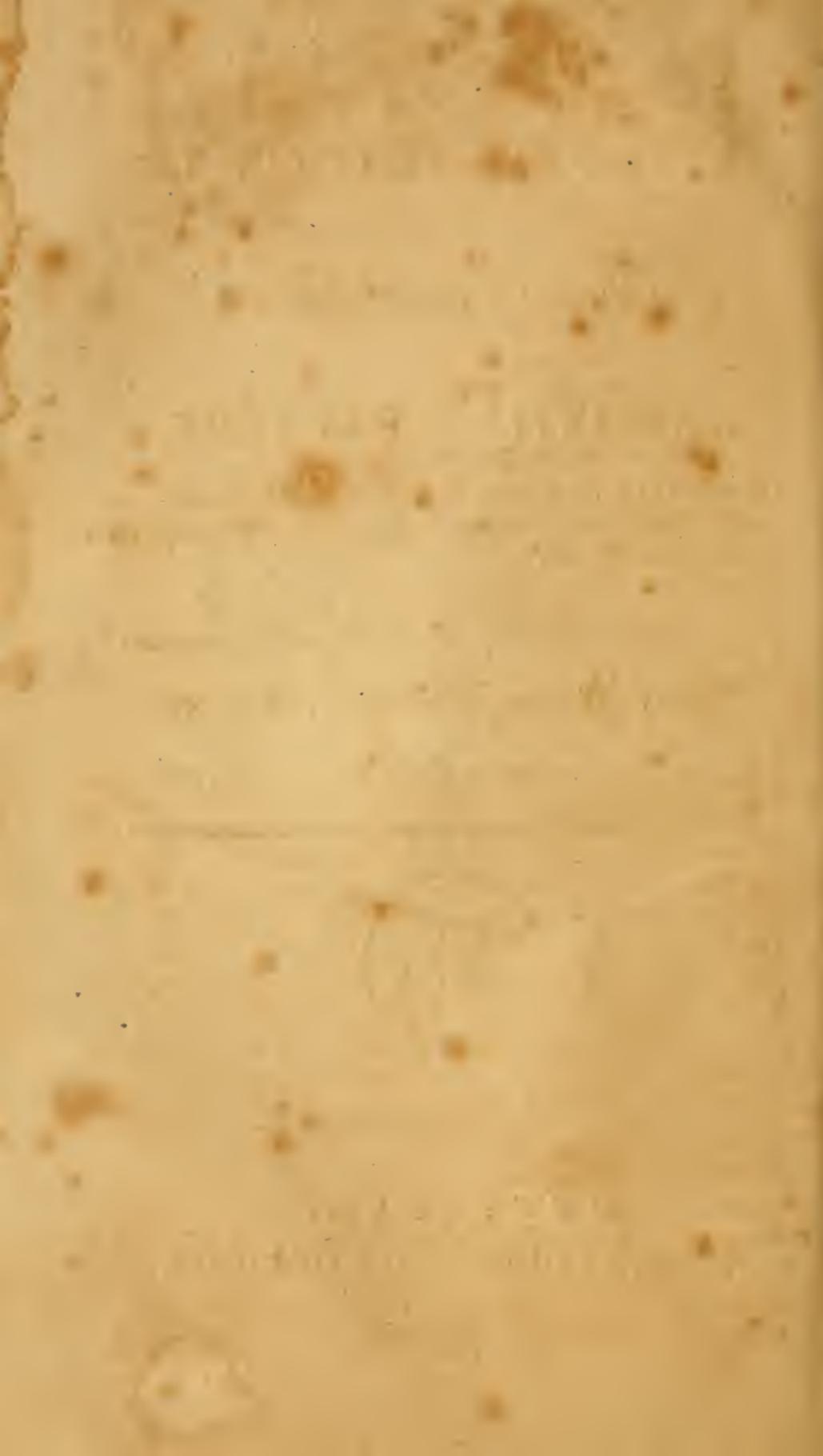
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A SECOND INQUIRY, &c.



SECTION I.

Introductory and Preliminary Observations.

THE inquiry, which respects the nature and design of Baptism, is, without doubt, an inquiry of great importance : and it is one upon which there has been a variety of opinions ; especially as infants are respected. There have been several publications already on the subject. The design of the following sections is to pursue the inquiry, in its present stage. It will, therefore, be necessary to premise, that I have already published an inquiry on the subject, which was supposed to contain a scheme of sentiments, consistent with itself, and supported by the sacred scriptures. The following is a summary of the scheme it contained.—That circumcision and consequently baptism, comprehending adult and infant, are considered, in the sacred scriptures, as a joint token of the *parent's* good covenant-standing—That the infants of believers are not to be considered, either as being *personally* in covenant, or as having any

personal title to its blessings—That the natural seed of Abraham, as such, were not considered as being *personally* in covenant and entitled to its blessings : consequently were not *the seed* peculiarly respected in the covenant which God made with Abraham ; for the promise “ is sure to all the seed ”—That, on the contrary, the seed respected, in the covenant, was a *spiritual seed* ; or *believers*, whether descendants from Abraham or not—That infant circumcision, therefore, as the infant was respected, could not signify any thing more, than its *dedication* to God ; which dedication was absolutely necessary, to complete the good covenant-standing of the parent. Whence it was inferred, that infants did not become *personal* and *distinct* members of the church, by being the subjects of circumcision ; and do not now become such, in consequence of their baptism—That the discipline to be exercised, which respects baptized children must, of consequence, be through the medium of the parents—That in this view of the ordinance, parents must be holden by the most solemn bonds to be faithful in the education of their dedicated children : and children must be sensible, of the importance of their repenting and believing, as their salvation must depend on personal exercises. Arguments were offered, to support the various parts of the scheme.

SINCE the publication of the above mentioned inquiry, another inquiry on the same subject has been laid before the public, with a design of correcting mistakes, contain'd in the former ; and to establish a different scheme of sentiments, respecting the ordinance in question.* But, after a candid and serious attention to what is advanced in the latter inquiry, it is believed, that the scheme it contains, is founded on mistaken apprehensions of the covenant, which God established with Abraham and other believers ;

* See DOCTOR WEST'S inquiry into the ground and import of infant baptism.

and, that the scheme contained in the former is capable of a scriptural defence.

THE design of the following sections is, to pursue the inquiry, in this stage of it. Hoping that some progress may be made, in bringing it to a satisfactory issue.*

IT will be necessary, in this place, to give a summary of the scheme advanced in the last mentioned inquiry. It is said, that although dedication be implied, in the circumcision and baptism of infants, yet the ordinance has a more important import, than barely to indicate dedication; and, that parents, who dedicate them, do keep covenant—That it also imports, that such children are peculiarly respected and comprehended in the covenant, which God makes with believing parents, as the seed which shall inherit the promises.—That, as God promised Abraham, that he would maintain a church among his posterity, so there is a transfer of the same promise to gentile believers, respecting their natural seed—That the promise contains a security of gracious qualifications, to be handed down from parent to child, to the remotest generations. Hence, it is said, that baptism is a token and confirmation, that the children of believers are respected, as the seed regarded in the covenant, as well as parents. Yea, it is supposed, that baptism has the same import, as the infant is respected, as it has respecting an adult; for it is considered, as an objection to my inquiry, that according to the

* DOCTOR WEST, in his inquiry, avoided the mention of any name, that every thing personal might be kept out of view. His example would have been followed in this, had it been practicable, and the reader have been under advantages to judge, whether that candor and fairness are used, which ought to attend all inquiries after truth. Necessity will oblige me to make frequent references to the Doctor's inquiry; and where references are made to particular pages, and no name is mentioned, it may be understood to refer to the Doctor's.—My design is, to pursue the inquiry, keeping every thing personal, as far as is possible, out of view. It is ardently wished, that the inquiry could be pursued, without any appearance of a public controversy; but it is so circumstanced, that it is impossible to avoid every appearance of it. Yet it is hoped, that the greatest candor will be exercised; and, that the feelings of no one will be unnecessarily wounded.

scheme contained in it, baptism "was of an import perfectly different, when applied to the child, from that which it was of, when applied to the parent." p. 33. It is acknowledged, however, that it is elsewhere said, that no promises are sealed to infants in baptism; that "the children of believers are possessed of no other rights than the children of unbelievers" p. 108; and herein, it is apprehended, there is a continual inconsistency in the scheme. This is a summary of the scheme advanced in the last mention inquiry.

BUT to give a more full view of it, it may be necessary further to observe, that the promise in which it is supposed the children of believers are comprehended, and which contains a security of their faith and holiness, and interest in the blessings of the covenant, is a *conditional* promise—That the condition of the promise is parental faithfulness. It cannot be determined precisely, what degree of faithfulness is requisite; yet it lies, somewhere between total neglect and absolute perfection. But then, faithfulness in educating children is considered as the condition of the promise, and the only security of the blessings of the covenant to children.

AGAIN; it is no where pretended, that God, in the covenant he establishes with believers, respecting their seed, in any way secures the requisite faithfulness in parents. Although it is asserted, that in case parents are faithful, to a certain degree, the holiness and salvation of their children will be secured by it; yet it is no where pretended, that God, by any covenant, hath secured to parents, *requisite grace* to render them faithful, any more than he hath secured to children, repentance and faith, without such faithfulness in parents. Doctor HOPKINS, who is quoted with approbation, expressly says, that although God has, in his gracious covenant, secured all that grace to believing parents, which is requisite to their perseverance in holiness, and so to secure their own sal-

vation, yet, "there is no promise in this covenant,
 "that if they do, with a degree of sincerity, give up
 "their children to God, and profess all those exerci-
 "ses, and promise to perform all that duty towards
 "them, which are implied in bringing them up for
 "God, that they shall certainly do all this; but they
 "may be very deficient and unfaithful in this cove-
 "nant, as it respects their children, and bring a *curse*
 "upon them, rather than the *blessings* promised in the
 "covenant." * If it be, indeed, the case, that paren-
 tal faithfulness is the condition of the promise, and,
 that there is no covenant security of such faithfulness,
 it must follow as a consequence, that the covenant
 contains, no greater security, of the holiness and sal-
 vation, of the children of believers, and so of their
 interest in the blessings of the covenant, than is con-
 tained in the general tender of those blessings, on the
 condition of personal repentance and faith; for the
 faithfulness of parents, as well as the repentance and
 faith of children, depends on the unpromised inter-
 position of divine grace. God may give to parents,
 that *grace* which is requisite to render them faithful,
 and he may give to children that grace which is re-
 quisite to their repentance and faith; but he has en-
 gaged neither, by any covenant;—in either case, it
 would be equally an unpromised favour. It ap-
 pears, therefore, that the whole scheme, as it is found-
 ed on the idea, that the covenant contains some se-
 curity of the blessings of the covenant, to the chil-
 dren of believers, is founded on mistake; for the sup-
 posed condition of such blessings, is parental faithful-
 ness; but of that faithfulness, there is no greater se-
 curity in the covenant, than there is of faith to chil-
 dren, and to all men under the gospel, in the general
 tender of salvation, on the condition of faith and re-
 pentance. In the one case, the tender contains no se-
 curity of faith. In the other case, the covenant con-
 tains no security of parental faithfulness. It amounts

* See Doctor Hopkins's System, Vol. 2. p. 346. 347.

to no more than a gracious tender of blessings. — But it was not designed, in this place, to proceed any further, than barely to state the scheme.

FROM the representations which have been given, the difference between the schemes held forth in the inquiries is this (viz.) The former supposes, that the infants of believers are in no proper sense in covenant—have no title to its blessings, nor any covenant security of them. Consequently, that they are not to be baptized with any such idea in view. But baptism is to be administered, to denote the parents full compliance with the covenant, by dedicating his seed to God; and dedication only is signified respecting the child. §

THE latter scheme supposes, that the children of believers are so comprehended in the covenant, which God makes with believing parents, as that there is a *security* of the blessings of the covenant to them; and so they are to be baptized in token of their being the seed respected in the promise who shall inherit its blessings.

HAVING given a particular view of the present stage and circumstances of the inquiry, I shall now proceed to see whether the scheme of baptism advanced in my former inquiry is not supported by the

§ The word *dedication*, as used in this and my former inquiry, involves in it, obligations on parents to exert all their abilities, to train up children for the service of God. Yet, it is supposed, p. 88. that if such obligations were implied in the dedication of children, that parents would feel as if they were relieved by the scheme, and would not have that sense of obligation, which accompanies a belief of the doctrine, that the salvation of their children is absolutely connected, with their faithful exertions. “Where nothing is depending, we feel no obligation” &c. But, is it the case that christians are chiefly influenced by selfish and interested considerations? And, do christians conclude, that if their own salvation or the salvation of their children be not absolutely secured by any supposed exertions, that they are under no obligations to exert themselves? Besides, although dedication only be signified in baptism, may not faithful parental exertions be greatly subservient to the salvation of children; and an instituted means of so important an event? Parents may have no reason to expect the salvation of their children if they are negligent; and at the same time have no absolute promise of their salvation if they are faithful.

facred scriptures; and, whether the latter scheme is not founded in misapprehension and mistake.

BEFORE this section is closed, it may be proper to make a few preliminary observations.

1. THE covenant which God made with Abraham was, substantially, the covenant of grace. This, it is apprehended, was sufficiently proved in my former inquiry. It has not, in the progress of the inquiry, been called in question.

2. THE decision of the inquiry, respecting the nature and design of infant baptism, depends, on the meaning of the term *seed*, in the covenant which God made with Abraham.

IT is said "If the promise implied nothing more, than that the Lord would be a God to all *who should believe*, in every age and nation, and that *all such* should be reckoned to Abraham as his *seed*, it will, then be manifest, that infant circumcision was a seal of no promise of blessings on the child," p. 119. The meaning of the term *seed* then, will settle the inquiry respecting the import of infant baptism. If it can be made evident, that the *seed* comprehended believers only, it is granted that the idea advanced in my inquiry is supported. And if it be true, as is conceded, that "Abraham was taught, that his children must be the children of *promise*—of *faith*; in order to be that *seed* who were to heir the blessings promised to Abraham" p. 24;—and if it be "Unquestionably true, that the promises in their true spirit, implied that none should be heirs of eternal good, but through Christ, and by virtue of *union to him*," as is asserted p. 25. I say, these concessions being made, one would conclude, that none but believers were comprehended in the term *seed*. But such a conclusion, it is said does not follow; "for such a general construction of the promise might leave it uncertain, whether there ever would be any believers," p. 25. In answer, it may be observed, that if, the security of a succession of believers depended on God's covenant transactions

with Abraham, the conclusion is just, but it should be remembered, that the covenant of redemption secures the existence of believers, or of a church—that Christ shall “see of his seed,” the travel of his soul and be satisfied.—But, all which is insisted on in this place is, that by determining the meaning of the term *seed*, the import and meaning of infant baptism may be determined.

3. By the *seed*, mentioned in the promise which God made to Abraham is meant those, who have a *sure title* to the blessings contained in the promise.

THE term *seed* points out those, who have a title to the promises. The apostle Paul teaches us to conclude, that the promise is “*sure to all the seed.*” Rom. ii. 16. Therefore, if it were the case, that the natural seed of Abraham, simply as such, had a sure title to the blessings of the covenant, they were respected as the seed, but not otherwise. To say they were the seed and yet that they had not a *sure title* to the promises, is to say, contrary to what the apostle teaches, that the promise is not made sure to all the seed. Hence,

4. IF it can be determined what *that* is, which connects with the promises, it can be determined, who are comprehended in the term *seed*.

IF being natural descendants from Abraham did give a sure title to the promises, then it may be determined, that all the natural offspring of Abraham, and no other individual, does belong to the seed. But if being real *believers* is *that* which characterizes the seed, then believers only are comprehended in the term. But, if over and above being believers, it were necessary, to having a sure title to the promises, that persons were also natural descendants from Abraham, then the seed must consist of the believing posterity of Abraham, and all others of every denomination, whether believers or unbelievers, must be excluded. But, if it be the case, that all true believers, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, have a sure

title to the promises, then the seed comprehends believers of all nations, and no other persons.

5. IF it were the case, that any nation or body of men were distinguished, as the body, out of which, God had even engaged to collect those, who should, through faith, inherit the promises, yet that would not denominate the individuals of such a nation or people, the seed.

IF it were the case, that God had promised Abraham, that he would supply his Church with members, from his natural offspring, by raising up from among them, a sufficient number of believers, yet it could not be said, that Abraham's natural offspring were respected as the seed, in any sense which concerns the present inquiry. It might with equal propriety be said, that all Gentiles where the gospel comes are respected as the seed, because God has now engaged to maintain his Church, from Gentile nations, in distinction from the posterity of Abraham. Yea it might, with the same propriety be said, that all mankind are respected as the seed given to Christ, for Christ's seed is to be collected from among men. The present inquiry, concerns *that* only which distinguishes the real seed from other men—To say that men are respected as the seed, or any body of men, because the seed is to be collected from men or a particular nation, gives no distinguishing characteristic of the seed, which the covenant or promise respects.

6. BEING in covenant, or having a title to the promises, and so belonging to the seed respected in them, implies that the conditions of the covenant are fulfilled.

GOD can be under no promissary obligations to bestow the blessings of the covenant, except on the condition expressed in the covenant. It is said, "All covenants contain certain conditions; and no one hath any right or claim to the blessings promised in the covenant, otherwise than upon a compliance with

the conditions of it." p. 90. Again, "We nowhere find *any covenant* subsisting betwixt God and any particular person, which promiseth the blessing of the favour and friendship of God, otherwise than on the *performance of certain conditions*, on the part of the person with whom it is established." p. 90. 91. A title to the promises, therefore, implies, that the conditions of the covenant are performed or fulfilled. Consequently the seed consists of such and only of such, who have performed, or complied with the conditions of the covenant. Infants, therefore, cannot be considered, as the seed respected in the covenant, on account of their connection with believing parents; for "the condition on which parents may expect blessings to descend to their children, is a proper dedication of them to God, and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." p. 97. This condition of the blessings of the covenant cannot be fulfilled, respecting infants, while in infancy; and more than that, there is no security of a performance of those conditions; for there is no security of grace to parents, to render them so faithful in the education of such children, as is requisite to secure the blessings of the covenant for them.

7. If it can be determined, with certainty, that circumcision was administered, according to divine appointment, to such children as had no title to the blessings of the covenant, more than what belongs to the children of heathen parents or infidels, it is certain, that in such instances, it could not signify any covenant title, and that it must have a very different import, as such children were respected, from what it had when administered to an adult believer.

As an adult believer is respected, it is said, to be "*God's seal of the subjects title to eternal life.*" But the same thing cannot be signified, concerning such as have no *personal* title to the blessings of the covenant: for in such a case, it would be God's seal to an acknowledged falsehood. Yet, it is acknowledged, that circumcised and baptized infants have, no per-

sonal right, to the blessings of the covenant.—That the promises are wholly betwixt God and parents.—That children are wholly passive ; and, that till such times as they are regenerated by the grace of God, they have no other rights than the children of unbelievers. p. 107, 108. If what is here conceded be true, it must be certain, that infant circumcision and infant baptism were never designed to be administered, in token of any title, which such children have, to the blessings of the covenant ; because it is acknowledged they have no title. And it will also follow, that circumcision and baptism, as infants are respected, cannot import the same thing, as when an adult believer is respected ; for the adult believer has a real title to the promises ; but it is acknowledged, that infants of believers have no rights, until they become personal believers.

8. It will only be remarked further, that in determining the import and design of positive institutions, we must be determined by the institutions themselves.

THERE IS, in this case, very little room for ingenious conjectures, and arguments derived from the nature of things. It is impossible to determine, from the reason and nature of things, why circumcision, as a token of the covenant, was preferred to every other possible sign. But, infinite wisdom was pleased, to single that out from all other tokens.—Perhaps, reasoning from analogy has been too far substituted for a direct appeal to divine institution, in determining the import and design of circumcision ; particularly, in section iv, p. 53.—64.

REASONING is, doubtless, necessary, in determining what institutions are ; particularly, when we reason from facts which are clearly revealed ; but we are not warranted in concluding, that certain things do belong to such institutions, because they may appear to us, as reasonable and important, as many other things, which do evidently form a part of divine institutions.

SECTION II.

If the main things advanced, in opposition to the scheme contained in my inquiry, were true, they would not militate against it, so far as the design of infant circumcision or of infant baptism is respected.

IT was my design, in a former inquiry on this subject, to shew, that under preceding dispensations, infants were not to be circumcised, nor under the present dispensation to be baptized, under the notion of their having any *personal* titles to the blessings of the covenant; either preceding, or in consequence of their circumcision or baptism.—That, whatever covenant subsists between God and parents, it is between them only; and their children have no titles to the blessings stipulated in it. Should it be conceded, that there is a covenant existing between God and believing parents, respecting their children, as extensive as that which is pled for, it would not follow, that infants are in covenant, or have any claims to a single blessing. This is amply conceded. It is said, p. 108, That the promises are made wholly to parents. And, p. 107, it is granted, that “*All the promises of the covenant as it respects the infant seed of believers, are made to the parent, HE alone can have any right or authority to plead them.*” As to the infant, it is admitted, that it hath no claims or covenant rights, any more than the child of an unbeliever. And in infant baptism, it is said, that “*No promises were sealed to us*” p. 108. And, when speaking of what takes place in baptism, respecting the infant baptized, it is said, “*Nor doth this give us any more right when we come to adult age, to be considered, received and treated as christians; and as being ourselves in covenant with God, than if we never had been baptized,*” (p. 108.) It is, therefore, fully conceded, that children of believers are not in cove-

nant, and are not to be baptized, in token of any personal title, which they can have to the blessings of the covenant, as is held forth in my inquiry; notwithstanding the supposed covenant, which exists, between God and believers, respecting their children. If it were admitted, therefore, that there is as extensive a covenant existing, as is pretended, yet the baptism of infants could not be designed, as a token of their personal title to covenant blessings; because they have no such title as is expressly granted. Which is the very principle advanced in my former inquiry.

AGAIN; a brief attention to the nature of the supposed promises, which respect the natural seed of believers, will make it evident, that they contain nothing, which will conclude any thing, against the scheme advanced in my inquiry; any more than if the condition of all the promises were, the repentance and faith of children. It is said, there is a conditional promise, that the children of believers shall share in the blessings of the covenant. The condition, it is said, is their being cordially dedicated to God, and faithfully educated by their parents. It may also be said, that there is a promise, that all children, without distinction, on the condition of personal faith, shall be saved. The former covenant gives no absolute security of the *faithfulness* of parents, and the latter gives no security of the *personal faith* of children. They neither of them amount to any thing more, than a tender of salvation. In both cases, it depends on the uncovenanted grace and mercy of God, whether children will ever share in the blessings of the covenant. God can as easily persuade children to believe, as persuade parents to be faithful; and the one is equally secured with the other. In short there is no security in either case. The supposed promise makes no advances, in introducing children into covenant, beyond what are made in the general tender of the gospel. As DOCTOR HOPKINS observes, the promise provides no grace to render pa-

rents faithful, in the sense of the promise ;—they may bring a curse upon their children, rather than a blessing. So notwithstanding the promise of salvation, on the condition of *personal faith*, children may, thro' unbelief, bring a curse upon themselves, rather than the blessings which are tendered.

WERE it true, that God had secured to believers, that grace which is requisite to their being faithful, in the covenant he establishes with them, there would then be a connexion between being the children of believers and salvation, according to the supposed promise ; although it would not constitute any personal title, respecting the infant. But no such grace is secured, by any covenant whatever. The impleaded promise, therefore, lays no other foundation for administering baptism to infants, on account of their being respected as heirs of the covenant, than for administering it to all infants, under the gospel, because they are respected in the covenant which God reveals in it. There is no security, either in the supposed promise, or rather *tender* which God makes to believers, respecting their offspring, or in the tender of salvation, on the condition of personal faith, that such children will ever share in the blessings of the covenant. In both cases, children are dependent on uncovenanted grace and mercy.

IT hence appears, that the extraordinary relation of the children of believers to the covenant, on account of the impleaded promise, which is so much insisted on, is altogether ideal. Were it true, that there was such a promise, it would not introduce the children of believers into any personal covenant standing, as is fully conceded ; and so would not militate, in the least, against the principal idea insisted on, in my Inquiry. And, if it be the case, that God has promised to *parents*, the salvation of their children, on the condition of parental faithfulness, but has not given any security of their faithfulness, it amounts to no more

than a bare tender of salvation ; such as is made to all men and all children, under gospel light.

IT is constantly supposed, that on account of the promise, now under consideration, God has peculiarly distinguished the children of believers, and admitted them into some peculiar relation to himself ; in consequence of which, they are to be baptized, in token of their special relation to the covenant. It is true, if there be such a promise, that God is tendering the salvation of children to believing parents, on the condition of the faithfulness of such parents ; instead of the personal faith of children,—the covenant condition of the gospel tender. But then, it is equally true, that special grace is as requisite to render parents faithful, as it is to produce faith in children ; and such requisite grace, is, in neither case, secured by any covenant. The truth then is, that in both cases, children are at the disposal of the uncovenanted mercy of God—That, in neither case, is there any security of the salvation of such children.

BUT, the promise, at best, does not introduce the children of believers into any personal covenant standing—They have no promises made to them, either before, or in consequence of baptism, as is fully acknowledged.—Whether there be any such promises as the impleaded one, will be considered in its proper place.—All that is now insisted on is, that if there were such a promise, it would not militate against the main principle advanced in my former Inquiry. This, I trust, appears, with sufficient clearness, from the observations which have been made.

SECTION III.

The promises contained in or annexed to the gracious covenant, which God established with Abraham, considered and explained.

THAT the covenant, which God dispensed to Abraham was, radically and essentially, the covenant of grace, is believed, by all pedit-baptists. It will, however, be admitted, that there were some things, which are to be considered as *appendages*, annexed to that dispensation of the covenant. It may well be supposed, that every dispensation of that important covenant, will be attended with different regulations, suited to the age of the world and state of the Church, at the time of its introduction. Such peculiarities are not to be considered, as *essential* parts of the covenant, but as *appendages*, which become necessary, on account of the state and circumstances of the Church. Of this nature, it is supposed those promises were, which God made to Abraham, of being “a father of many nations,” and of kings coming from his loins;—Of the “land of Canaan for an everlasting possession;” and, of being the progenitor of the Messiah. Of this nature, were the institutions of sacrifices, &c. under the Mosaic dispensation. It is universally believed, that those promises and institutions were peculiarities of those dispensations of the covenant of grace; and were suited to the age and circumstances of the church, during their continuance. As particular institutions and promises are varied, according to the different circumstances of the church, consequently, in every different dispensation of the covenant of grace, it is to be expected, there will be annexed different appendages; although the *essential* blessings of the covenant will be the same, through every dispensation.

HENCE it becomes evident, that it cannot be con-

cluded, that every particular promise, which was annexed to the dispensation of the covenant, in the time of Abraham or Moses, is also annexed to the dispensation of the covenant, under the gospel; or that there are certainly the same particular institutions. It is not supposed, by any, that the promises made to Abraham, that he should be fruitful,—that his seed should inherit Canaan;—or, that the institution of sacrifices, in the time of Moses, do exist under the present dispensation. And there are obvious reasons for their not being continued, arising from the different state, age and circumstances of the Church.* Those extra or nonessential promises may be varied, under different dispensations of the same covenant, and the covenant itself be the same, under every dispensation. Thus, under the gospel dispensation, no promises are made to believers, of an earthly Canaan,—of being the progenitors of a saviour; yet, the covenant dispensed is the same, with that dispensed to Abraham. Varying circumstantial promises and institutions, although it may vary the dispensation of the covenant, yet it does not alter the covenant itself. As those promises which God made to Abraham, of his being fruitful,—of his being the progenitor of a

* It may be thought, by some, that the foregoing observations do *destroy or weaken* the usual argument in favour of infant baptism, which is derived from the institution of circumcision, under preceding dispensations.—But, it is apprehended, that they do not, in the least affect it. There are the most indubitable proofs of an institution, under the gospel, which is of the same nature with circumcision under preceding dispensations; namely, baptism. The only question to be determined is, whether infants are the proper subjects of it? As much may be presumed in favour of their being such, on the principles which have been advanced, as on any other. Infants were the subjects of the same ordinance, or of one of like import, under former dispensations. And although circumcision is abolished, and baptism is instituted in its place, yet there is not the least intimation of any alteration respecting the subjects. There is, therefore, sufficient reason to believe, that infants are the subjects of baptism, as they were of circumcision. It is incumbent on Antipedobaptists, to advance positive evidence of the abolition of the ancient precepts, which constituted infants the subjects of a similar ordinance, before they object a want of precept. But, as much may be presumed on the above observations, in favour of infant baptism, as on any other.

Saviour,—of inheriting the earthly Canaan, and of having a church maintained in his family in particular, do not essentially belong to the covenant of grace, so it cannot be certainly concluded, that any of them exist, under the present dispensation, because they did exist under the preceding.

FROM this view of those extra promises, which were made to Abraham, it was thought unnecessary, to enter into a particular consideration of them, in my former inquiry. As it was evident, that Abraham's natural offspring were not personally entitled, to the essential blessings of the covenant, it was concluded, that they were not circumcised in token of any such title, or as being the *seed*. And, that since the covenant was wholly between God and the parent, so circumcision, as a token of the covenant, did wholly respect the parent. However, it is since said, that the natural seed of Abraham were so respected in the covenant, which God made with him, particularly, of supporting a church in his family, as that infants were properly considered as the seed. Although being Abraham's natural seed “did not make them as the seed to whom the Lord would be a God.”—A promise of the same import, it is further said, is transferred or continued to Gentile believers; and consequently their children are to be baptized, in token of the respect paid them in the covenant, as the children of believers were circumcised, under the former dispensations.

It is necessary, therefore, to enter into a particular consideration of the promises which God made to Abraham, in the dispensation of his gracious covenant to him; recorded in Gen. xvii. 1—8.

THOSE promises, in which Abraham's natural offspring were respected, may be comprehended in the following things.

1. THAT Abraham should be exceedingly fruitful, and be a father of many nations.

2. THAT Abraham's posterity should possess the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession. This promise of Canaan, however did not respect *all* the posterity of Abraham. The promise only imparted, that some of Abraham's posterity (more or fewer of them, as God in his sovereignty should determine) should possess that land; and at the time he should appoint. Accordingly, several generations were entirely wasted before any of Abraham's posterity entered upon Canaan, as a fulfilment of this promise.

3. ANOTHER promise, which God made to Abraham, was, that a Saviour should proceed from his loins.

It is to be remarked, again, that this promise, although it was to have its accomplishment, in the posterity of Abraham; yet it never was designed to respect Abraham's posterity, in every line and direction. There was a particular line from Abraham, in which the promise was to be accomplished; in pursuing which line, much the greatest part of Abraham's posterity would be excluded. It, in the beginning, respected, *Isaac*, in distinction from *Ismael*; then *Jacob*, in distinction from *Esau*.

4. THERE was a promise made to Abraham, of a church, to be kept up in his family, until Christ, the promised seed, should come.

THIS promise, however, did not exclude believers, of other nations, from the church, as appears from Exodus, xx. 48, 49. But then, there was no nation particularly respected in this promise, except that which proceeded from the loins of Abraham. This is the promise respected, where it is said, that the promise which God made to Abraham "secured the existence and continuance of real religion—a true church in his family and posterity." p. 76.—It is also urged, that this promise is continued or transferred to Gentile believers and their offspring. So that there is the same security of the maintainance of a church, among the descendants of Gentile believers,

as there was, formerly, of the maintainance of a church in Abraham's family.

IT is necessary, therefore, particularly to consider this promise, and to endeavour to ascertain its design and import. The following observations may subserve such a purpose.

1. THE promise was made to Abraham, and was not transferred to any one after Abraham.

THE good, which is the subject matter of the promise, was promised, as a reward of Abraham's faithfulness. And although Abraham's posterity were respected, as the body in which it should be accomplished, yet Abraham's successors could not plead the promise, as made to them, in the sense in which it was made to Abraham. The promise might ever after be pled, as made to Abraham. Hence it is observable, that the Jews, in every age, treated it and pled it as a promise made to their father Abraham, in distinction from themselves. When God bestowed peculiar blessings upon the Jews, it was common to acknowledge them, as a fulfilment of the promise, which God made to Abraham;—because he remembered the covenant, which he had made, and the oath which he had sworn to him. All the distinguishing favours, which God bestowed on that people, were ever considered, by the pious Jews, as the testimonials of the love and respect, which God bore to Abraham, in distinction from themselves.

2. THE promise under consideration, of continuing a church in the family of Abraham, was not an *essential* part of the covenant of grace.

THE covenant of grace, in its nature, no more confirms its blessings to Abraham's natural posterity, than to any other nation. Originally, it would have been no more inconsistent with the covenant of grace, to have limited the tender, and actual bestowment of its blessings, to any other nation or family, than to Abraham's. These observations, it is presumed, will not be controverted. And, it is equally true, that

Abraham might have enjoyed the essential blessings of the covenant, if God had made him no promise, of supporting a church among his descendants.—Such a promise therefore, was but an *extra-promise*—an *appendage* to the covenant of grace. In such a sense this promise was considered by President Edwards.* Christ, the Son, had a promise from the father, that he should “see his seed” &c. but that promise, although it seemed a church, did not confine it to Abraham’s family.

3. THE promise, under consideration, although it was to meet with a fulfilment in Abraham’s natural offspring, yet had no respect, and was never designed to be extended, to *all* the branches of his family.

ISHMAEL, ESAU and their posterity, were never respected in those promises, which God made to Abraham; either of inheriting Canaan—of being the progenitors of Christ, or of constituting the church.—This is clear from fact, as well as scripture declarations. This promise, therefore, did not respect *all* the natural offspring of Abraham. Ishmael could not have been circumcised, therefore, in token of his being respected in such a promise; for Ishmael and his posterity were, really, no more respected in it, than *Ham* and his posterity. The promise, as to the design of it, implied thus much, that a church should be kept up among Abraham’s natural offspring; but was never designed that it should be as extensive as that offspring. Had God kept up a church, in Abraham’s family, although a great proportion of his offspring were excluded from it, the promise would have been fulfilled. In this respect, it was like the promise of the Land of Canaan. God bound himself by promise, to give that land to Abraham’s posterity, for an inheritance. But it was not the design of the promise, to secure it to Abraham’s whole posterity. It was consistent with the design of that pro-

* See his Inquiry into Qualifications, &c. p. 87—88.

mise, that not one of Abraham's posterity should inherit Canaan, for several generations.—Thus the promise, of maintaining a church in Abraham's family, was such, as that *whole* branches of his family might be excluded; and according to the true spirit and design of the promise, be no more respected in it, than any other family;—than *all men* are respected in the promise made to Christ, that he should “see his seed;” for Christ's seed were to consist of *men*, as the church respected, in this promise, was to consist of Abraham's natural posterity. The one promise had no respect to *all men*, nor the other to *all* Abraham's natural offspring. The promise made to Abraham, of the support of a church in his family, respected his natural offspring, only, as the body or people, out of which, the seed should be collected; in the same manner, the promise of a seed to Christ, as a reward of his faithfulness, respected mankind, as the body out of which that seed should be collected. The whole human race, therefore, are respected as the seed given to Christ, precisely in the same sense, that Abraham's natural offspring were respected as the seed, in the promise made to Abraham. The fact however is, that the promise made to Abraham was never designed to extend to all Abraham's natural seed; nor the promise made to Christ, to all the individuals of the human race. This may shew, with what propriety Abraham's natural seed are considered, as the seed respected in the promise, under consideration.

4. IT is further to be observed, concerning the promise in question, that it did not entitle or secure, one of the blessings of the covenant, to any individual of Abraham's posterity, considered simply as a descendant from him.

THIS will be readily acknowledged; for it is expressly said, “Being children of the flesh did not mark them as the seed, to whom the Lord would be a God.” P. 16. And, p. 15, “It is on all hands

conceded, that there is no promise that the Lord will be a God to any but *believers*." If it be the case, that being the natural seed of Abraham did not mark any one as belonging to the seed, merely saying that Abraham's natural seed were the seed respected, is no further a description of the seed, respected in the promise made to Abraham, than saying *men* were respected, as the seed given to Christ, is a description of Christ's seed. The fact is, that being *men*, does not mark any individual, as one of Christ's seed; neither does being a natural descendant from Abraham, mark any individual, as one of the seed of Abraham, in the sense of the promise.

5. It is worthy of particular notice, that the promise made to Abraham, of maintaining a church in his family, was a promise which was local and temporary;—a peculiarity of the Abrahamic dispensation, and of the Mosaic, which was grafted into it.

If this observation be true, it will effectually remove, the foundation of the scheme of baptism, which has been opposed to that contained in my inquiry. It is insisted on, that this promise contained a security of true religion, among Abraham's natural seed: and, that there is a transfer of it, to Gentile believers and their natural seed. The existence of such a promise is considered, as *that* which constituted the propriety of infants being formerly circumcised and now baptized, as the seed respected in the covenant. It appears, I trust, from what was observed in the last section, that if all this were admitted, nothing could be inferred in opposition to the scheme advanced in my inquiry: Yet, if such a view of the promise proceeds from mistake and misapprehension of its design, it is important it should appear.—And, the following considerations, it is believed, make it evident, that the promise, instead of its being one, which was designed to be continued over to the gospel dispensation, was local and temporary;—adapted to the state

and circumstances of the church under preceding dispensations.

1. THE very *nature* of the promise leads to the conclusion, that it was local and temporary.

THE promise secured to Abraham, a church, to consist of his *natural offspring*: This is abundantly insisted on. The very promise is restricted to Abraham's natural offspring, as the people from which the church should be collected. The promise cannot operate, respecting any other posterity. A like promise may be made, respecting Gentile believers; but if there be any such promise, it must be a new one; for the promise made to Abraham respected his posterity, in distinction from the posterity of any other progenitor. It was designed, therefore, to continue so long as God designed to continue his church, in Abraham's family, in distinction from other nations, and no longer.

2. IT is natural to conclude, that the promise under consideration was temporary, and a peculiarity of preceding dispensations, as all the other particular promises, among which this is ranked, were unquestionably such.

THIS was the case, as to the promise made to Abraham, of being a father of many nations—of a savior from his loins;—and, of his seed's possessing Canaan. No one supposes those promises are continued to believing Gentiles, under the gospel dispensation. This consideration renders it probable, that the promise to Abraham, of the support of a church in his family, was temporary; unless some peculiar reasons, in this case, would lead to a different conclusion. But,

3. THE truth is, there were peculiar reasons for the promise, under preceding dispensations, arising from the state of the church at that time, which do not exist under the present dispensation.

WHEN God entered upon the dispensation of the covenant to Abraham, the church was in an infant state. Things were not then prepared for extensive

operations. The principal character, that of JESUS CHRIST, was not introduced on the stage. Extraordinary preparations were necessary for his introduction.—The dispensations, from the time of Abraham, were designed, as preparatory steps for Christ's introduction. Every measure, which was taken, pointed to that important event.—

THAT the way might be prepared for so extraordinary an event, as the appearance of Christ, it was necessary, that the knowledge of the true God, and of the state of mankind, should be preserved and promoted in the world. This made it necessary, for God to select a particular people, and by special and peculiar means, to communicate to them, the knowledge of himself and of his designs. It is true, it was in the compass of God's power, to have trained up all nations, in the same way; but this must have so filled the world with miracles, as to destroy their use; for they must then have been so frequent, that they would have been ranked among the common laws of nature. And besides, the way was not prepared for such extensive operations. It was necessary, therefore, that a particular people or nation should be separated, and by signs and wonders trained up, to the knowledge and acknowledgement of the one true God, until Christ should appear. And Abraham and his posterity were selected for that purpose, as a reward of Abraham's peculiar faithfulness.—And, as it was necessary, that one nation should be selected from all other nations, so it was necessary, that this people should be kept distinct from the heathen nations, that they might not be corrupted by their vices. Hence it became necessary, that a country should be peculiarly devoted to them. On this was grounded, the promise of the land of Canaan, for an inheritance; and the ancient inhabitants of that good land were driven out. As the Messiah was to proceed from Abraham's loins, so that nation was, from the nature of the case, pointed out, as the people to be prepared

for the reception of Christ; for their expectations and national concerns, in the great event, would, naturally interest their feelings and awaken their attention. Thus it appears, that the promise of a church and the consequent enjoyment of means, made way for and rendered the promise of the land of Canaan necessary. The latter promise, became necessary, to the execution of the former.

BESIDES the things which have been mentioned, there is another consideration which points out the wisdom and importance of the promises, in the time of preceding dispensations in particular. The great and important blessings of the covenant, of pardon and salvation had been published, only in a very summary way. Their fulfilment, or full accomplishment, was future and distant. The people of God had, at that time, little or no experience of God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promises. It was necessary, therefore, that God should enter upon such a course of dispensations, as should strengthen the faith and increase the comfort of saints, in those promises which respected distant and invisible things. No measures could be better calculated to answer those purposes, than the promises which God made to Abraham. In the fulfilment of them, such a scene of operations and events would necessarily take place, as must strike the minds of God's people, in the most forcible manner, and make such impressions, of God's unchangeable faithfulness, in executing his promises, as could hardly be erased. The promise, respecting the increase of Abraham's family—of the maintenance of a church in it, and of the land of Canaan for an inheritance, opened a scene of such wonderful operations, as would afford the most ample conviction and experience, on the subject of God's faithfulness, in fulfilling promises. The conviction, arising from the fulfilment of promises, through so long a course of operations, and such a vast variety of events, must bring the promises which related to scenes, far distant

and future near by; and place them in a certain point of light.—This was, in fact the use and improvement, which was made of God's faithfulness, in executing what he had promised to Abraham. Hence, Moses enumerates to the Israelites, the many things God had done for them; in increasing and rendering them so numerous—in delivering them out of the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and conducting them through the wilderness, &c. He then, in the most explicit manner, teaches them, that all these things were done in fulfilment of the oath, which God had sworn to their fathers. “Know therefore (says he) that the Lord thy God he is God; the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.” (Deut. vii. 7—9.) It is observable, that Moses teaches the Israelites, that this is the very use they were to make of the dispensations of God, in the fulfilment of the promises he made to Abraham, viz. to impress on their minds a sense of the faithfulness of God, in fulfilling his promises, even those which related to the most distant period.

FROM the preceding observations it becomes evident; that there were *peculiar* reasons for the promises which God made to Abraham, at the time he entered upon the dispensation of the covenant to him; which must necessarily operate till the appearance of Christ. And those reasons cease to exist under the present dispensation. The gospel dispensation, is not a preparatory dispensation. The Savior has appeared, according to ancient promises and predictions.—The way is now prepared for extensive operations.—It is no longer necessary, that the Church should be confined to a particular nation; and consequently unnecessary, that a particular country, an earthly Canaan should be allotted to it.—The Church under the present dispensation, has such abundant experience, of God's faithfulness in accomplishing distant promises, and those attended with the greatest diffi-

culties, as to need none of those promises for such an end.—As the end of those promises was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, and so have answered their design, they have ceased. This is certain respecting the promise of the land of Canaan, and as that promise was in subordination to the other promise, respecting Abraham's natural seed, so there is reason to conclude, that the other is also terminated.

4. THAT the promise which God made to Abraham, of maintaining a Church in his family, was temporary and local, is evident, because the promise, as appears from fact, has ceased to operate ever since the gospel dispensation was introduced.

NOT only have the peculiar reasons for the promise ceased to operate, but the promise itself. It is doubtless, true, "That the covenant which God established with the father of the faithful (Abraham) made provision for gracious qualifications to be transmitted from parent to child" &c. that is to his natural posterity, so far as was requisite to the support of a Church in it. And, this was the simple condition of the promise, viz. Abraham's fidelity. From hence, it may be determined, what was the extent and designed duration of the promise. When the promise ceased to operate; that is when God actually ceased to impart such gracious qualifications, as were requisite to uphold a Church in the family, or among the posterity of Abraham, then the promise terminated. It will avail nothing to say, that the Jews frustrated the promise, by their unbelief; for if the promise secured a Church in Abraham's family, it secured those "those gracious qualifications," which were requisite to maintain it, through the whole period respected in the promise. If there were not a security of gracious qualifications, there was no security of a Church. At the time therefore when God ceased to impart such influence, or when he gave the Jews over to unbelief, the promise terminated; if the

promise ever had any important meaning. If the promise only secured a Church, in Abraham's family, on the condition of there being a sufficient number of believers in it, but contained no security of *faith* to a sufficient number, there would have been no greater security of a Church, in Abraham's family, than of a Church among the posterity of Ham. The promise therefore did contain a security of such gracious qualifications as were necessary to support a Church, through the whole period respected in the promise. At the time, then, when the Jews were given up to such unbelief, as that a Church ceased to exist among the Jews, and they were rejected by God, at that very time, the promise terminated. And this time has long since arrived. And what is worthy of particular notice is, that the time when it happened, was the very time when the Messiah appeared; when the ancient dispensation ceased, and the gospel dispensation was first introduced. Ever since that time, God has withholden such gracious influences, as were necessary, to support a Church among Abraham's natural posterity.—The covenants and promises are removed from them: and they are given over to confirmed unbelief. They are become a race of vagabonds in the earth; and there remains no traces, of their ever having been a favourite people. They are a curse, an astonishment and a bye-word among all the nations of the earth.

BUT it is said, the promise under consideration is not terminated; for, although it does not operate respecting Abraham's natural posterity, yet it is transferred to Gentile believers and their natural posterity.—The Gentile Church is grafted into the same olive tree, &c. On which it may be observed, that it ought to be remembered, that the promise under consideration is one, which respects the *natural posterity* of Abraham, in distinction from other posterities. If a promise of like import be made to Gentile believers and their posterity, it cannot appear from a prom-

ise made to Abraham, respecting his posterity, in distinction from others. A promise of like import, respecting believing Gentiles and their seed, must be another promise and appear, if it appear at all, from some other declaration than that, which was made to Abraham.

FURTHERMORE, although it be the case; that the Gentile Church is grafted into the same stock and partakes, with the Jewish Church, of the root and fatness of the olive-tree, yet it cannot be inferred from thence, that there is the same promise, respecting their natural offspring, as there was respecting that of Abraham; for the Gentile Church may partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree, or of the great and essential blessings of that covenant, on which both the Jewish and Gentile Churches were founded, without the promise under consideration; which promise is but an appendage of that covenant. But this will be more particularly considered, before this section is closed.

SHOULD it be further said, as an objection to the extinction or termination of the promise made to Abraham, of the maintainance of a Church in his family, that, although the promise is, at present, suspended in its operation, and the Jews, Abraham's natural descendants are in a state of rejection, yet they will one day be restored, and the promise again operate respecting them.

THE answer is, that although the calling in of the Jews is a certain event, yet they will never be so called in, as to take the place, in which they were put, by this promise. This promise gave them a pre-eminence over, and distinguished them from all the Gentile nations. But when they shall be again called into a Church-state, they will only enjoy a place in Christ's Church, in common with the Gentiles;—they will be only fellow-heirs with them.

BESIDES, there now is and has been a *total* suspension of the promise, as Abraham's natural seed are

respected, for almost two thousand years. And it makes no material difference, whether those two thousand years were immediately preceding the end of time, or in an intermediate space. And, if the promise may be suspended two thousand years, it may be forever suspended.—The promise is, at present, extinct; and it will never be revived, so as to make that distinction between Abraham's family and other nations, which it was originally designed to make, and which did in fact exist, antecedent to the introduction of the gospel dispensation.—It is evident, therefore, from fact, that the promise in question was local and temporary, because it has, in reality, long since ceased in its operation.

5. THAT the promise made to Abraham, of the maintainance of a Church in his family, was temporary and a peculiarity of preceding dispensations, further appears, from the ancient prophecies, and the declarations made in the gospel, importing that the Gentiles, at large are introduced, under the gospel dispensation, into the same place, respecting the Church, in which the natural seed of Abraham were placed, by the promise in question.

SHOULD this appear to be really the case, it would unquestionably follow, that the promise, now under consideration, was temporary, and a peculiarity of former dispensations. It is said, that this promise is transferred over to Gentile believers and their seed; but there is no intimation of it in the promise, as made to Abraham, more than of a transfer of the promise of the earthly Canaan. Gentile believers have an undoubted title to all the essential blessings of the covenant; but they certainly have not to every extra-promise, which was made to Abraham.

THAT the promise now under consideration was peculiar to the former dispensation, and that nothing similar to it now exists is evident, as all the promises relative to a Church, do now respect the Gentiles, at

large: and not Gentile believers and their offspring, in particular. There is, at this time, full and ample security of a Church, in a promise made to Christ, by the Father, and in a promise made to the Church by Christ. And there are promises and declarations, that the Church shall be supplied from the Gentile world, as it formerly had been, from the posterity of Abraham. These observations are evident, from many things contained in the prophecies. In the following passages, the Gentiles at large are contrasted to the natural seed of Abraham, where the Church in gospel times is respected. "*Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles.*" Isaiah, xlii. 1. And verse 6, "*I the Lord have called thee in righteousness and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee; and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles.*" And chap. xlix. 6. "*It is a light thing, that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth.*"

In the succeeding part of the same chapter, the Church is represented, as being in a very low and disconsolate state, on account of the rejection of the Jews. More especially, because the Jews had been the nation, from which she has always expected a succession of members. The Church is represented, as complaining in all the bitterness of a tender mother, when deprived of her children. "*The Lord hath forsaken me and my Lord hath forgotten me.*" The prophet then administers comfort to her, by assuring her, that she should be abundantly supplied from the Gentile world, as she had been, antecedently, from the natural seed of Abraham. Verse 22. "*Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set my standard to the people, and they shall bring thy sons in their arms and thy daughters shall be carried upon*

their shoulders." Verse 23. *Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, &c.*

IN chapter, liv. 3, the prophet, after-calling upon the Church to rejoice, says, "*For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.*" Here it is observable, that the Gentiles at large are spoken of, as that body of people, to which the Church should look. Not to Gentile believers and their natural seed, in particular.—Hence the prophet, chap. lxxv. 1, and onward, when speaking of the calling in of the Gentiles and rejection of the Jews, calls the latter, the Jews, "*A rebellious people which walketh in a way which is not good.*"—The Gentiles are described as a *people*, not as the *natural seed* of believers. "*I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not. I said, behold me, behold me unto a nation that was not called by my name.*" These passages most evidently teach, that after the rejection of the natural seed of Abraham, the Gentiles at large are to be considered, as the body from which the Church should collect its members; as she had antecedently collected them from the Jews. Many other passages, in the prophets, teach the same truth, which it is unnecessary particularly to mention.

IN the New Testament, there are the same representations. As in Acts xiii. 46, when the Jews, enraged with malice and envy, spake against the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, it is said; "*Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, it was necessary, that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you, but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*" Here the Gentiles collectively are mentioned, as the people which, in future, should be regarded by God, in his dispensations, as the Jews, Abraham's natural offspring had been regarded, in time past.

OUR Savior, in several parables, foretold the rejection of the Jews; and, that the Gentiles at large, or collectively, should succeed them, as the people, from which the Church should be supplied with members. This is observable in the parables of the sower—of the husbandman, &c.

THE apostles, with great constancy, inculcated the same idea. Peter, when sent for by Cornelius the Gentile, after hearing the things which God had done for him, said, "*Of a truth I perceive, that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.*" The truth which the apostle, in these words, declared that he perceived, was, that the antient distinction, between Jews and Gentiles, was totally abolished. That the Gentiles were introduced into the same standing with the natural seed of Abraham. Accordingly, all the epistles abound with the same representations. *There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all, that call upon him.* Rom. x. 12, 13. "*There is neither Jew nor Greek,*" &c.

FROM these passages and many other of the same import, it is evident, that the Gentiles, considered collectively, are introduced into the same standing with the natural seed of Abraham.—That the Church, in future was to be supported from the Gentile world, as it had been antecedently, from the natural seed of Abraham. There is now the same promise, in kind, respecting the Gentile world, as there had been, respecting Abraham's posterity.

ON the whole, from the various observations which have been made, I trust, the conclusion, that the promise which God made to Abraham, of the maintenance of a Church among his natural seed, was temporary and local, is fully supported. It appears to be a promise which was peculiar to former dispensations.—It appears from the nature of the promise, if God ever meant to extend his Church to other na-

tions; for that promise, as has justly been insisted on, did respect Abraham's natural seed, in distinction from others.—The promise is ranked among promises which, without exception, were temporary, and confined to preceding dispensations.—The promise did cease to operate, at the very time, when the former dispensation ceased and the present dispensation was introduced. The Jews are wholly rejected by God, and the Gentiles are introduced, as the people, which God now respects, in all his dispensations relative to his Church.—Finally; it appears, both from the Old and New Testaments, that the Gentiles at large, instead of the natural seed of Abraham, is the body out of which the Church is to be supplied with members, under the present dispensation, as it had been formerly, from the offspring of Abraham.

It is necessary to make one more observation, concerning the promise in question, that it may appear in its proper point of light.—viz.

5. THAT it was a *typical* promise.

WHEN God made the promise to Abraham, which we are now considering, it was in an early age of the world, and the Church was in its infancy. Very few things had been revealed. Therefore, God adapted that dispensation, to the time and age in which it was to operate. He dealt abundantly in *types* and *figures*. He pre-figured and shadowed forth heavenly things, by those which were temporal and earthly, as being the most familiar. There were "*Meats and drinks, divers washings and carnal ordinances imposed, until the time of reformation.*" That is, until the gospel day should arrive. The whole law was considered, but as a "*shadow of good things to come.*" Accordingly, almost every thing which took place, or was ordained was typical. And there is special reason to conclude, that the dispensations of God, concerning Abraham's natural posterity, were such. It is certain, that the good land of Canaan was typical of heaven. And God's distinguishing the natural pos-

terity of Abraham, in the manner he did, was, in conformity to the genius of that dispensation, a typical transaction. Abraham and his natural seed, were a fit type of Christ and his spiritual seed. And their having a security of Canaan, as an inheritance, was a fit type and emblem of that glory and happiness in heaven, which is secured to the Church, or Christ's spiritual seed.——It is evident,

1. THAT Abraham was considered as the head of his natural posterity, as Christ is of believers.

2. IT is also a manifest truth, that all the promises which were made respecting Abraham's natural posterity, were made to Abraham; and as a reward of his faithfulness; as the promises respecting believers are made in Christ, and out of respect to his fidelity.

THAT all the promises were made to Abraham, which respect his natural seed is evident, as their accomplishment is always mentioned in sacred writ, as a fulfilment of the promise which God made, and of the oath which he swore unto Abraham.

3. THE land of Canaan was considered as a type of heaven.

4. THAT the particular promises, respecting Abraham's natural offspring were typical is evident, from their being now done away and removed far out of sight, as other typical transactions are.

OF this nature there is something very remarkable, respecting all the transactions which related to Abraham's natural offspring. Since Christ, who was the *substance* of all the antient types is come, there is a total silence, respecting all those transactions. Nothing is said concerning Canaan. There are no peculiar gracious dispensations, towards the natural posterity of Abraham. The covenants and the promises are no longer dispensed to them. That people are, as it were annihilated. They are taken behind the curtain, and removed out of sight. They are treated in such a manner as may well put man-

kind out of all danger of deception, from their having once been a favourite nation.—They exist no longer as a nation; but are become a curse in the earth.—They are laid aside, like a garment which is of no further use.—There are no remaining traces, of their being a favourite nation. The tender of blessings is no longer made to the Jews, in distinction from other nations. Being natural descendants from Abraham or any other believer, is no longer held out, as a condition of salvation; but faith in Christ is proclaimed, as the lowest condition of favour. And, Canaan is no more promised and exhibited as the reward of piety, but heaven itself is tendered, as the great good which believers may expect.—There is, as appears from these observations, reason to believe, that the promises of God, which respected Abraham's natural offspring were universally typical. This was the case with all, excepting the promise under consideration; and the reasons which have been offered, I trust, are sufficient to convince an unbiassed mind, that it was, also, the case in that particular. If so there is additional reason to conclude, that it was a temporary promise, and limited by former dispensations.

I HAVE now finished the observations, which I designed to make, on the promises made to Abraham; and particularly, on the promise which respects the support and maintainance of a church in his family; on which so great a stress has been laid. And if the observations which have been made are just, it will appear,

1. THAT the promise which God made to Abraham, never contained any security of faith and holiness to all Abraham's natural offspring.

THE promise secured the maintainance of a church among that posterity; but it was never designed to extend the church to every individual, on any condition whatever. There was no security of the faith and holiness of *all* Abraham's posterity, any more,

than there was a security of the faith and holiness of every individual of the human race, in the promise made to Christ, that he should "see his seed." The promise made to Christ of a seed respected men, in the same sense, that the promise of a church to Abraham, respected his natural posterity.

2. IT will appear, from the observations which have been made, that circumcision had but a circumstantial respect to the promise which God made to Abraham, of maintaining a church in his family.

THE promise itself was but a circumstantial promise—Was but an appendage of the covenant, under that dispensation; and was a peculiarity of it. So far as circumcision respected it, it was but a circumstantial respect; as much so, as the respect which was had in that ordinance, to the promise of the land of Canaan. There would be as great a propriety in forming a system of sentiments, on the promise of an earthly Canaan as on the promise which God made Abraham, respecting the maintenance of a church, among his natural offspring.

3. FROM the foregoing observations it appears, that the supposition, of a promise now made to believers, of the same import with the promise made to Abraham, of maintaining a church in his family, must proceed from mistaken views of the covenant, God did make with him.

ON such a supposition, the scheme of baptism, which is opposed to that contained in my inquiry, is founded. But it appears, from the observations which have been made, that the reasons, for the existence of such a promise, were peculiar to preceding dispensations. That the promise itself is abolished, as Abraham's natural seed was respected—That the promises, of supporting and maintaining a church, do now respect the Gentiles at large, as they formerly did the Jews; and not Gentile believers and their seed.

4. FROM the foregoing observations it appears that

being *respected* in the sense in which Abraham's natural seed were respected, in the promise which God made to Abraham, is no distinguishing characteristic of the *true seed*, which shall inherit the *essential* blessings of the covenant of grace.

MUCH is said in favour of Abraham's natural seed being *the seed respected* in the covenant. It is abundantly insisted on, that Abraham's natural seed were the seed respected in the covenant, which God made with Abraham, because they were respected in the promise which God made to Abraham, of supporting a church in his family. It is, however, acknowledged, at the same time, that "being children of the flesh did not mark them as the seed to whom the Lord would be a God." p. 16. And this concession shows, that being one of Abraham's natural offspring, was no description, or characteristic of the true seed. How were the natural offspring of Abraham respected, as the seed? They were the body out which the seed was to be collected; just as the Gentiles are the body, out of which the church is now to be collected; or as mankind are the body, out of which Christ's seed is to be collected. Would it be any discriminating mark of the seed, which shall inherit eternal life, to say, that Gentiles are the seed? Or would it describe Christ's seed, to say they are *men*? It would be just such a description of the seed, in those cases, as is given of them, when it is said, that Abraham's natural seed are respected as the seed. "It is, on all hands, conceded that there is no promise that the Lord will be a God to any but believers." p. 15. If God will not be the God of any but believers, not the God of one of Abraham's offspring, unless a believer, then *believing* is the distinguishing characteristic of the seed. Saying that Abraham's natural offspring were the seed respected, gives no description of the seed, really respected in the covenant, any more than saying that *men* are the

seed respected, which was given to Christ. However important such expressions may have been thought to be; they convey no ideas, which lead to a discrimination of the true seed, in any sense, which concerns the present inquiry.

OTHER remarks and uses will be made of the preceding observations, in the sequel; which are not necessary to mention in this place.

SECTION IV.

The Abrahamic covenant further considered, with a view to determining, whether Abraham's natural seed were the seed respected in the covenant, in any such sense, as is inconsistent with the scheme advanced in my Inquiry.

IN my former inquiry it is asserted, that the natural seed of Abraham, simply as such, were not the seed respected in the covenant, and so were not circumcised, as being in covenant. If the natural seed of Abraham, as such, were not the seed, it is evident they could not be circumcised as the seed, merely on that consideration; for the ordinance, in that view of it, would imply a falsehood. But it is since insisted on, that Abraham's natural seed were so *respected* in the covenant, as that they were to be considered and circumcised as the seed. But how *respected* as the seed? Not as being such, simply on account of their being children of the flesh; for that marked no one as the seed. p. 16. If the natural seed of Abraham were respected as the seed, in the sense in which it is pretended they were; that is, in such a sense as that it did *not mark any one* "as the seed to whom the Lord would be a God," it must be a perfectly immaterial consideration, as to determining the inquiry relative to the true seed. If they were *respected* as the seed, yet, being natural descendants from Abraham.

did not constitute them the seed, they were respected in so remote a sense, as could lay no foundation for being circumcised, as the real seed, which is intitled to the promises.

THERE are two passages contained, in the account given of the transactions betwixt God and Abraham, which it is supposed do clearly teach, that Abraham's natural seed were respected and included in the covenant; and that they were circumcised as such. This is evident it is said, from those expressions in Gen. xvii. 11, where God says, "This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and *you*" (*plural*) not me and *thee*; and my covenant shall be in *your* (*plural*) flesh for an everlasting covenant. This meant the flesh, both of Abraham and of the circumcised man-child." p. 27. To which it may be replied, that if the pronouns *you* and *your* were designed, to comprehend Abraham and the circumcised man-child, it will follow that the child was in covenant in the same sense in which Abraham was; for there is no discrimination made. On this hypothesis, therefore, the natural offspring of Abraham were to be viewed and circumcised, in token of the same title to the blessings of the covenant, which Abraham had. Yet this would by no means accord with what is said p. 108. That no promises were sealed to the child. And that baptism in infancy gives us no "more right, when we come to adult age, to be considered received and treated as christians; and, as being ourselves in covenant with God, than if we had never been baptized."

AGAIN; it may be further answered; that although the pronouns *you* and *your* are plural, yet it cannot be inferred from thence, that there was any reference had to the circumcised child, in those expressions. It was necessary, for other reasons, that those pronouns should be in the plural number.—That right conceptions may be obtained, of the text in question, it will be necessary to look back as far as

verse 9. Where God says to Abraham, “Thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou and thy seed after thee, in their generations.” Here, it is to be considered, God is introducing a new institution; and is teaching Abraham, the peculiar design of it. In the first place, he informs Abraham, that it was not designed merely for him; but that it was also designed to extend to his seed, in their generations. That is, his *successors*, as they came upon the stage, must also conform to the same institution. Having enjoined it on Abraham and his seed, or successors, in their generations, to keep covenant, God proceeds to inform Abraham, what he and his seed, in their generations, must do, *that they may keep covenant*, verse 10. “This is my covenant which ye (i. e. you and your seed in their generations) shall keep, between me and you, every man-child among you shall be circumcised.” The thing required to keeping covenant, or which comprehended the whole, consisted, in circumcising themselves and their male-children. It is very evident, from this verse, that the *adult*, and *not the infant seed* of Abraham, are meant by the term *seed*; because, in keeping covenant, is comprehended, the circumcision of male-children. The seed, as well as Abraham himself, are supposed, capable of having male-children to circumcise. So that by Abraham and his seed, is meant, Abraham and his *adult, believing seed*—Those, who are capable of actually complying with such an institution. To their keeping covenant, it was necessary for them to circumcise their male-children; which could not be applicable to infants.—God having informed Abraham, what he and his adult or believing seed must do, to keep covenant, viz. circumcise every man-child. He then teaches Abraham the meaning of it. Verse 11. “And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.” That is betwixt God, Abraham and his adult, believing offspring, in their generations. Not a token of the

covenant between God, Abraham and his circumcised child; for nothing had been said respecting children, except with a view to informing Abraham, that it was necessary for him and his adult believing offspring, in their generations, to circumcise such children, to their keeping God's covenant.

It is evident, from the connexion there is, between the objected text and the preceding words, that the plural pronouns *you* and *your* were necessary, although there was no respect, to the circumcised child in them. If nothing more were meant, than to teach the obligations on adults, respecting circumcision, and its import or meaning respecting themselves, the plural pronouns would be necessary. Abraham and his seed were the persons, uniformly respected in the preceding words. Abraham's adult and believing seed were meant by the seed, in their generations: because the injunction to circumcise is laid on them. They are supposed capable of an active compliance with the command; and, it is supposed, they may have male-children to circumcise. When it is said, that this "shall be a token of the covenant between me and *you*" it means, between God, Abraham and his adult believing seed, who may and do comply with the institution, by circumcising themselves and their male-children.—The objected text, therefore, instead of opposing the idea, held forth in my inquiry, is a direct support of it; viz. that the circumcision of infants was not designed, as a token that the infant was in covenant; but, as a token that the parent, who alone was *active* did keep covenant with God.

THE other passage, contained in the account given of the transactions between God and Abraham, at the time when circumcision was instituted, is in v. 14 of Gen. 17th chap. "And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, *that soul shall be cut off from his people. He hath broken my covenant.*" It is asserted, that the uncircumcised man-child is meant, by the soul which shall be cut off from

his people ; and by him who has broken the covenant. “ There is nothing *here* said about the parent.” p. 28. But it appears, on the contrary, from the observations which have been made, that the whole preceding address was made, directly to parents ; and, no mention had been made of children, except as being *subjects* of circumcision ; and that as a fulfilment of the parent’s covenant obligations. As God had been revealing the duty of *parents*, in their successive generations, to circumcise their children, as a token of *their* keeping covenant, it would be an extraordinary mode of arguing to infer, from thence, that, if the circumcision of a child should be neglected, the *child* would break covenant. And, the declaration, whether introduced as a consequence from what had been said, or for any other reason would be very abrupt and unnatural.—On the contrary, it would be very natural, after God had been inculcating on Abraham and other believing parents, in their successive generations, the duty of circumcising their male children, and that as necessary to their keeping covenant, to address them in this manner ; “ If any of you do neglect or omit the circumcision of a man-child, that soul who shall presume so to neglect his duty, shall be cut off from his people,—he has broken my covenant.” It would be a direct inference from what had preceded. These considerations would naturally lead to the conclusion, that *by the soul which should be cut off*, &c. must be meant the parent, who should neglect the circumcision of a male child. *Junius* and *Tremallius*, in their version of the Hebrew Bible, evidently consider, the breach of covenant as having a respect to an adult, who should neglect circumcision.* Mr. Poole is decidedly of the opinion, that the breach of covenant does respect the parent, who should neglect to circumcise a male child ; and

* Præputiatus autem mas, qui non circumciderit carnem præputii sui, utique excinderetur homo ille populo suo ; nam irritus fecit fœdus meum.

that the Hebrew admits of such a version of the text. His words are as follows. “*And the uncircumcised man-child; or rather, And as for the uncircumcised man-child.* So the nominative is put absolutely, as is frequent in the Hebrew tongue. *Whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised; or, who shall not circumcise the flesh of his foreskin; for the Hebrew verb may be rendered actively, which seems best here, because the punishment seems more justly to belong to the parent, who was guilty of the neglect, than to the child who was not capable of this precept, and therefore, not guilty of the violation of it.*” There is, therefore respectable authority to support such a version of the text, as shall determine, that the breach of covenant does respect the parent, who should neglect the circumcision of a male-child; but it appears, from what has been said, that no other version of it so naturally agrees with the tenour of the preceding discourse. The words would then be, a very natural inference from what had been previously advanced. But the supposition, that the breach of covenant respects the child, is a conclusion, which can be collected from nothing which precedes, and not only so but must be introduced, in a manner, the most abrupt and unnatural.

BESIDES, the opinion, that the child is meant as the breaker of the covenant, is absurd in its very nature. The infant child is utterly incapable of receiving or executing the injunction of circumcision, both as it respects itself or another. And, to suppose that the child is meant, is the same as to suppose, that a breach of covenant may take place without consent, knowledge, or a single exercise. It is a very singular and unwarrantable conception of forming and breaking covenants, to suppose, that those things may take place, not only without consent, but without any exercise, or even knowledge of the whole transaction. Blessings, respecting one individual, may be suspended on the conduct of another, without his knowledge

or consent ; but to call this entering into and breaking covenant, as it respects him who has no consent or knowledge of the transaction, is a singular conception of covenants.

BESIDES ; the supposition is utterly inconsistent with other things which are advanced, respecting the children of believers. Being cut off from his people it is said implies being “ separated from the people of God, excluded from the privilege of eating the passover,” &c. p. 30. This is to suppose something to which, as is acknowledged, the child would have had no right had it been circumcised ; for p. 107, it is said, “ That nothing which is found in the *believing parent* or which is done *by him*, brings the infant into such a relation to the covenant and to the church, as invests the child with any right or title to the privileges of the church, or the blessings of the covenant of grace.” In the next page it is said, that such children as are baptized, have no other rights than the children of unbelievers, ’till God is mercifully pleased to bestow converting grace upon them. It is inconceivable, therefore, that *being cut off from his people*, should respect the child, when, if it had been circumcised, it would have had no right or claims to the privileges of the church.

IN my former inquiry, the case of Moses’ neglecting to circumcise his son and what followed in consequence of it, was supposed to afford decisive evidence, that the breach of covenant, in such a case, does respect the parent. In that case, the whole censure fell on Moses ; for God sought to kill him ; but no threatnings were denounced against the child. If the breach of covenant, in such a case, were the child’s, it is mysterious, that Moses should be so highly censured, and yet there be not the least intimation of blame, respecting the child.—It is said, p. 30, That Moses’ son was also involved in evil consequences ;—he must have been separated from the people of God, excluded from eating of the passover, &c. But as has

been already observed, it is difficult to conceive, how he could have been cut off from those privileges, when if he had been circumcised, he would have had no other rights than the child of an unbeliever.— Thus much is certain, that if any evil consequences did follow the neglect of Moses, respecting his child, there is no intimation of it, in the whole history given of the transaction, in sacred writ. It is certain the whole neglect was the neglect of the parent, and that he alone was blamed. This is the case, in every instance of such an omission. No negligence or criminal exercises are ever chargeable on the infant. The blame is wholly the parents.

ON the whole, from the view which has now been taken, of the *only* expressions in the whole *relation* of the transactions between God and Abraham, which are pretended to determine decisively, that Abraham's natural seed, were so respected in the covenant God made with him, as to denominate them the seed, and to introduce them into a covenant relation to God. Is it not evident, that no such thing is held forth? Each of the alledged passages, is perfectly consistent with the sentiments advanced in my inquiry; yea, when attended to, in connexion with the preceding declarations, afford a direct proof and support of them.

SECTION V.

Other things which have been advanced to show, that Abraham's natural seed were the seed respected, in the covenant which God made with Abraham, considered.

IF it were true, that Abraham's natural seed were respected in the covenant, which God made with Abraham, in the sense in which it is pretended they

are, yet, nothing would follow as a consequence, which would determine the inquiry relative to the true seed. Abraham's natural seed may be *respected*, as far as it is pretended they are and yet, not belong to the seed; for, "being children of the flesh, did not mark them as the seed. Mankind may be said to be the seed *respected*, in the promise made to Christ, that he should "see his seed," &c. but being *men* did not constitute, or mark any, as belonging to that seed. This will be readily admitted in this case; and it is true, that the natural seed of Abraham were the seed in the same sense and in no other, in the promises made to Abraham. But, saying that Abraham's seed were respected in this sense, makes no advances in characterizing the true seed, who shall inherit the promises. And the stress which is laid on it, as so very capital a consideration, rather tends to confound, than to help the inquiry, respecting the real and true seed.

It may, however, help to a right apprehension of the antient dispensations of God, to attend to the various things which have been advanced to show, that there was a special respect paid to Abraham's natural seed.

It is a general observation, that "If it be true that the promises of that covenant, (meaning the Abrahamic covenant) of which circumcision was the seal, respected the natural seed of Abraham; it must be evident, that the promises of the same covenant with believers, respect their natural seed. p. 65.—If by the promises of the covenant be meant, the promises of the essential blessings of the covenant, the assertion may be admitted; for the covenant is unalterable, in that sense of it. Yet, it is not true, that the covenant in that sense of it, does respect Abraham's natural seed, in any such way as to entitle any one, simply as one of Abraham's natural seed, to one of its essential blessings. If what is meant is, that the same promises are made, respecting the natural seed of

Gentile believers, as were made, respecting the natural seed of Abraham, it is by no means true. Although God promised Abraham that his natural seed should be very numerous—should bring forth a Saviour—should possess Canaan, &c. yet no such promises are made to Gentile believers, respecting their posterity. And, although God promised Abraham, that he would support a Church among his natural offspring, yet it appears, from what has been already observed, that no such promise is made to Gentile believers, concerning their offspring. The promise now respects Gentile nations, in distinction from the Jews, the posterity of Abraham.—But, although the promises, which God makes to Gentile believers may not be the same, in every respect, with the promises which he made to Abraham, concerning his natural offspring; yet it may answer some important purposes, to attend to some of the things, which have been advanced to show, that Abraham's natural seed were respected, as the seed mentioned in the promise, which God made to him, of being his God and the God of his seed.

It has been said, “It is manifest that the promise to Abraham of the land of Canaan respected his natural seed. And it is equally clear, that God promised to Abraham to be the God of his natural seed, as to give them that good land.” p. 66. It is further said that “Had that *parental duty*, which was implied in the practice of *infant-circumcision*, and connected with it, been faithfully and punctually performed; and, yet, the land of Canaan not given to the children of Abraham, it might with reason, for ought we can see, be objected, that God had suffered his faithfulness to fail. p. 68. Again, it is further said, p. 70. “If the Deity were bound, in covenant faithfulness, to give the land of Canaan for a possession to the natural offspring of Abraham, on condition that *infant-circumcision* was practised and those parental duties connected with it faithfully performed in every

successive generation ; He was, also, equally bound, in covenant faithfulness, on the same condition, to be the God of the same natural offspring." And, it is further said, that, "If the Deity were bound, by promise to Abraham,—to bestow the land of Canaan upon his posterity for a possession ; the same covenant and promise secured the existence and continuance of real religion,—a true church in his family and posterity." p. 76.

IN reply to what is here urged, it may be observed, that every thing contained in those promises may be admitted, and yet nothing would follow in favour of Abraham's offspring being respected as the seed to whom the Lord would be a God ; or in any sense help the inquiry relative to the true seed.—If God did promise Abraham, that his natural seed should inherit Canaan—That a Church should be maintained among them ; and Abraham were faithful in keeping covenant with God, it is doubtless true, that if God had not given Canaan as a possession to Abraham's posterity, and had not kept up a Church among them, he would not have been faithful to fulfil his promise.—But then, what would follow as a consequence, which would determine any thing of importance, in the present inquiry ? Would it follow, that Abraham's natural offspring, as such, were the seed to whom the Lord would be a God ? What was the import of the promise ? Was it, that God would bring *all* Abraham's natural posterity into Canaan ? That he would keep up a church, which should embrace all his natural posterity ? Certainly, this was not designed in the promise. Several generations were wasted, before one of that posterity entered on that good land. The posterity of Ishmael and of Esau never did inherit it. What was designed in the promise was, that Canaan should be possessed by Abraham's posterity ; not by all his posterity ; but the inhabitants should consist of his posterity ;—and, that a church should be kept up among them. Not that

all his posterity should be the subjects of those gracious qualifications, which were requisite to qualify them, as members of the church; but, that such qualifications should be bestowed upon a sufficient number. What the number was to be, and who the individuals should be, which should compose it, was left to the sovereign determination of God. The promise had the same respect to Abraham's natural posterity, that the promise made to Christ, of a seed, had to mankind. Although the Father did promise Christ a seed, and that this seed should consist of *men*; and although the Father would not have been faithful, if he had not given *men* to Christ as a seed; and although the promise implied, the support of religion among men; yet would it be any distinguishing characteristic, of the seed, respected in the promise to Christ, to say, they were *men*? It would be just such a description of Christ's seed, as is given of the seed respected in the promise to Abraham, when it is said, Abraham's natural seed was the seed respected in the promise. For the promise only respected Abraham's natural offspring, as the people out of whom the seed, who should inherit Canaan, &c. should be collected; as the promise made to Christ respected mankind, as the race of beings out of whom the seed of Christ should be separated. After all, being *men* did not mark any as belonging to Christ's seed; neither did being a child of Abraham mark any, as belonging to the seed, to whom the Lord would be a God; as is fully acknowledged. *Believing* alone distinguished Christ's seed, and, as to the promises made to Abraham, it is acknowledged, as "Unquestionably true, that the promises, *in their true spirit* implied that none should be heirs of eternal good, but through Christ and by virtue of *union to him.*" p. 25. And, p, 15, "It is, on all hands, conceded that there is no promise, that the Lord will be a God to any but *believers.*" It is evident, therefore, that believing is the distinguishing characteristic of the seed, both in

the promise made to Abraham and to Christ. And that saying *men* are the seed in the latter promise, and that *Abraham's natural seed* are the seed respected in the former, is no distinguishing characteristic of the true seed.—All the laboured proofs, that Abraham's natural seed was the seed respected in the promise made to him, are of no consequence; for it is admitted they were respected, in the sense in which it is pretended they were; yet, not in such a sense as gives any distinguishing, mark of the particular seed, which the inquiry respects. It conveys a plausible sound, but conveys no more distinct ideas concerning the seed, who shall inherit the promises, than saying men are respected as the seed given to Christ, distinctly describes the seed which were given to him.

ANOTHER argument to show, that Abraham's natural posterity were respected as the seed, mentioned in the promise to Abraham, is derived from the expressions of the Apostle Paul, Rom. ix. 4. In which the apostle, when speaking of the Jews the natural posterity of Abraham, says, "*To whom pertaineth, the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the promises.*" It is said, that "the term *adoption*, as it is invariably used, by this apostle, implies, the possession of that *filial spirit*, which distinguishes the saints, and entitles to all the gracious promises of the gospel, in their fullest extent." p. 10, 11.

IN answer to what is here said, it may be observed, that if *adoption* in that text must be understood, as a distinguishing mark of the seed, and is to be considered, as implying "the possession of that *filial spirit*, which distinguishes the saints," &c. then it comprehended believers only; and so believers only were respected as the seed.

BESIDES, it may be inquired, whether the Jews were, as a people, adopted in such an high sense? They certainly were not considered, as adopted in such a sense, as implied that they were real saints? If

the word *adoption* must be considered, in the sense mentioned above, there is no warrant for applying it to the Jews, considered, merely, as the posterity of Abraham.

THAT the apostle does apply those expressions, to Abraham's posterity, is undoubted; and that there was a propriety in his doing it is manifest; without supposing, that Abraham's natural posterity were respected as the seed, in any such sense, as will help us to distinguish the true seed, to whom the Lord will be a God.—It is granted, God did promise Abraham, that he would maintain a church, for a season, among his posterity, in distinction from other nations. That is, that he would collect from them, a *seed*, which should inherit the promises. God entered upon the execution of that design. Abraham's posterity was, in this sense, adopted, in distinction from the Gentiles; yet, that promise did not distinguish any individual, as one who should inherit the promise, of having the Lord for his God. But God designed to separate from them a seed, to whom he would be a God. As this was God's design, the *adoption* and the *promises* did respect them, in such a general sense. So it was proper, that the giving of the law and all the special means of grace should be restricted to them. The natural posterity of Abraham might justly be said as a nation and people, to be *adopted*, to have the *law* and the *promises*; for as God had special designs respecting them, even such designs as required, that the *law* and the *promises* should be exhibited, particularly to them, so the promises, &c. might, with propriety, be said to *pertain* to them. And yet, they were not, on that account, the seed to whom the Lord will be a God, any more than mankind are the seed given to Christ, because they are adopted, as a body, in distinction from devils, and have the means of salvation restricted to them. These observations are supported, by what the apostle observes, in the words which follow the expressions under considera-

tion. The apostle who is the best interpreter of his own expressions, openly declares, he would not be understood to say, that the natural seed of Abraham were to be considered, as the seed which should inherit the promises. “Neither, says he, because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God.” Verse 7, 8. Nothing can be inferred, therefore, from the expressions under consideration, in favour of Abraham’s natural seed being the seed respected in the promise, in any sense, which concerns the present inquiry; as those expressions do not imply, that Abraham’s natural offspring did constitute the seed, to whom the Lord will be a God.

It is further said, that it is evident Abraham’s natural posterity were peculiarly respected, as the seed mentioned in the promise to Abraham, from the objection which the Jews make to their rejection, and the apostles answer. Rom. iii. 1; and Rom. xi. 1, 2. The Jews object, that their rejection would not consist with the truth and faithfulness of God—That it would not consist with the promises he had made concerning that nation. The objection goes on the ground, that there was a particular respect to them in the promises. p. 12, 13. And it is said, that the apostle “gives an answer, which supposeth, that the promise had, indeed a particular respect to the *natural seed* of the father of the faithful.” p. 13.

It might be sufficient, to remove the apparent force of this argument, to say, that the natural seed of Abraham were distinguished by the promise made to Abraham, as the seed out of whom the true seed, who should inherit the promises was to be collected; but not as being the true seed, considered simply, as Abraham’s natural seed. This is a granted point; for it is acknowledged, p. 14, 15, that, “They which are the children of the flesh these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are

“ counted for the seed—The import of this reasoning is, that the promise did not imply, that the Lord would be a God to the seed of Abraham merely because they were his *natural offspring*; but over and above this, they must be the children of promise.—It is, on all hands, conceded that there is no promise, that the Lord will be a God to any but believers.” It is, therefore, expressly acknowledged, that the promise did not respect the natural seed of Abraham, in any such sense, as gave them any interest in the Lord as their God, only, as being believers.

BESIDES; whatever that respect was, which was paid to the Jews, the apostle is clear in it, that it was not such an one, as constituted them the seed; but that it was their being believers. This is clear from the apostle’s reasoning, contained in Rom. xi. chapter. He there teaches the Jews, that their unbelief was the ground of their rejection—That no promise stood in the way of their rejection, in case of unbelief—That their being the natural offspring of Abraham, was not the least objection to their being rejected. The promises, therefore, must respect them in the character of believers, and in no other character. Considered as unbelievers, God was under no greater obligations to them, on account of the promise he made to Abraham, to be their God, than he was to the posterity of Ham. The respect which God had to them, merely as natural descendants from Abraham, was, in itself, not the least objection to their rejection.

THE observations which have been made, in reply to the preceding arguments, may serve as a reply to several other things which are considered, as favouring the position, that Abraham’s natural offspring were respected as the seed, mentioned in the promise.

ON the whole, it appears, from what has been said, that if it were conceded, that Abraham’s natural seed

had a respect paid them, as the people, from whom the true seed were to be collected ; yet, it would give no distinguishing characteristic of the seed, to whom the Lord will be a God.

SECTION VI.

In which it is inquired, whether there now is or ever was, any covenant or promise, which absolutely connects the piety of children, with the piety and faithful exertions of parents.

THAT there is a promise, which secures the faith and salvation of children, on the condition of parental faithfulness, is essential to the scheme of baptism, which is advanced, in opposition to that contained in my former inquiry. If it were admitted, that there was a promise of that nature, and qualified as that is, I trust it appears, from what has been already advanced, that it would not afford a sufficient support of the scheme of baptism, founded on it, nor militate against the scheme I have advanced. Nevertheless, if it can be shown, that no such promise or article is contained in the covenant, which God establishes, between himself and believers, it will go far towards accommodating differences. If the promise in question did exist, it would afford no greater security of the salvation of children, than is contained in the tender of salvation, upon the condition of the repentance and faith of such children ; for it is not pretended, that the faithfulness of parents is secured, by any covenant. It amounts, to no more than a tender of salvation, on certain conditions, which conditions, are in no way secured. All this may be said, concerning the general tender of salvation, which is made in the gospel, on the condition of personal faith. In the latter ten-

der, there is no security of faith ; and in the former, no security of parental faithfulness.

BUT the question, now under consideration, respects the *being* and *existence* of a promise or constitution of God, which connects the fate of posterity, with the conduct of parents. Several things have been offered to consideration, to show, that this is the case.—Those arguments will now be particularly considered.—There are several arguments from *analogy*, to which it may be proper to attend, although it is presumed, that arguments of that nature, cannot go very far, in determining, the nature and design of positive institutions.—

1. It is argued, that it is altogether rational to suppose, that there is full provision made, for the salvation of infants, as they share in all the disadvantages of the fall. p. 54, 55.

To which it may be answered, that it will not be questioned, whether there is provision made for the salvation of children ; but it is not seen, that more can be inferred from it, as the argument is expressed, in favour of the children of believers, than in favour of other children. Other children share, in all the disadvantages of the fall, as well as the children of believers. If the bare participation of the disadvantages of the fall be a sufficient reason for the conclusion, that the children of believers have ample security of salvation, may not as much be inferred concerning other children ; for it is as true, that the children of unbelievers share in the disadvantages of the fall, as that the children of believers do. Besides, there is no divine constitution, that either one or the other shall be saved, short of *personal* faith.

2. ANOTHER argument is grounded, on the covenant and constitution which God made with the first parents of mankind, respecting their children. It is said, the fate of their posterity was suspended on their conduct—That their offspring were comprehended with them. And, as a constitution of such a nature

was begun at their original creation, it is no more than reasonable to suppose, that it is still continued, and will be continued, through all successive generations. p. 56.

IN answer, it may be observed, that this argument is founded on a principle, which would involve such consequences, as the author of it would be unwilling to admit. The argument proceeds, on the principle, that the present constitution, which God has established, connects the conduct of parents and the fate of their posterity, just as the first covenant connected the fate of Adam's posterity, with his conduct. Otherwise it is supposed, that the advantages derived from Christ, would not be "paramount to the disadvantages, which, in the same respect, were derived from Adam." In the latter case,—the case of Adam, the fate of all his posterity, to the remotest ages, was suspended on *one act* of disobedience. If the argument must be allowed any weight, let it go its full length, and then this conclusion must be adopted, that one act of faith, or one act of unbelief must determine the fate, not only of the next succeeding generation, but of all generations to the end of time. Would the advantages derived from Christ be, otherwise, "paramount to the disadvantages, which were derived from Adam?"

THE comparison, instead of being made, between Adam and believing parents, should have been made, between the first Adam, and Jesus Christ, the second Adam. Instead of parents being constituted the federal heads of God's new and gracious covenant with men, that is applicable only to Jesus Christ. Adam was the federal head of his posterity; but Christ is, now, the head of his spiritual seed. And, as the fate of the posterity of Adam, was suspended on his conduct, so the fate of men, is determined by a union with Christ the second Adam, as a fruit and effect of his atonement. As in Adam all died, so in Christ, all his spiritual seed, shall be made alive. The connexion which secures life, is a connexion with Christ,

not a connexion, merely, with pious parents. It is acknowledged, however, that a connexion with pious parents is highly important, as it implies, the enjoyment of the best means of salvation. Yet, the sacred scriptures consider a connexion with Jesus Christ, as that which alone secures salvation. We are no where taught to say, As in Adam all died, so in believing parents shall all be made alive. It is, therefore, concluded, that it is union to Christ, and not to believing parents, which secures the blessings of the new covenant ;—that Christ is the federal head and not believing parents.

It is further said, “ As the disadvantages, arising from the fall of Adam are more than compensated to the world by Christ ; this would give us reason to suppose, that in the covenant established in Christ, there is as real and ample provision made for blessings to be transmitted from believers to their seed, as there was in the covenant made with the original parent of mankind,” p. 57. But, adopting the same mode of reasoning, may it not be further said, “ Inasmuch, as the disadvantages arising from the fall of the first Adam, are more than compensated to the world in Christ ;” and inasmuch, as the ruin of the whole human race was infallibly connected with the disobedience of Adam ; so there is reason to believe, that there is provision made, not only for the security of the salvation of the children of believers, but for the actual salvation of the whole human race. Would this blessing more than “ compensate the disadvantages of the fall ?” I would by no means intimate, that the author would designedly advance such an idea ; but is it not a consequence, which would necessarily follow from the principle and mode of reasoning, which is adopted, in the argument under consideration ?

3. THE connexion under consideration between parents and children, particularly between believing parents and their offspring, is argued from the extent of Christ’s propitiation. p. 58. It is said,

Christ's atonement was made for the whole world— That the covenant was sprinkled, with the blood of Christ. And, that, "*The riches and grace of the new covenant do in fact, unquestionably correspond with the worth and virtue of that blood with which it is sprinkled, and in which it is established; and are commensurate therewith. But on no other hypothesis is this correspondence so visible, as on that which supposeth the covenant of grace to be so formed as to transmit its blessings to posterity.*" p. 58.

IN reply, it may be asked, whether the principle and mode of reasoning, adopted in this argument, would not most necessarily terminate in error? May it not be said, that inasmuch as the new and gracious covenant of God, is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ, so the grace of that covenant, will unquestionably correspond with the worth and virtue of that blood, and be commensurate with it. But, on no other hypothesis, is such a correspondence so visible, as in making effectual provision for the salvation of all men? Or, would that have been too great an expression of grace, to correspond with the worth and value of Christ's blood? The principle and mode of reasoning, adopted in this argument, concludes as strongly, in favor of universal salvation, as in favor of the promise it was designed to establish. That the measures God will take, will be such, as will correspond with the blood, with which the covenant is sprinkled, cannot be doubted; but men are inadequate, to the task of pointing out the measures, which will best correspond with the value and worth of Christ's blood. Short-sighted man would naturally conclude, that the salvation of all men would be such a display of grace as would, above all, correspond with so precious blood as that of Christ's. But, revelation teaches a different doctrine. A conclusion, formed on the premises advanced in this argument, can amount to nothing more than mere presumption.

4. It is urged in favor of the promise, establishing a connexion between the faith and piety of parents, and the piety of their children, that, "There are many things in God's providential dealings," which teach it—That a divine constitution, of the same nature, is visible in wicked men's transmitting their moral characters to their posterity. And, "There is no more natural inconsistency in supposing, that pious parents should transmit a good moral character to their posterity, than that impious parents should transmit one, that is bad." p. 60.

IN answer to this argument, it may be observed, that it is as true, perhaps, that good men do transmit a good moral character to their posterity, as that wicked men transmit a bad one to their posterity.—And there could be no reasonable objection, against the rectitude of God's government, if he had fixed an invariable constitution in both of those cases. But it does not appear, from observation, that there is a fixed and invariable constitution in either case.—Good men, so far as can be determined from observation, in many instances, have very wicked and abandoned children. On the contrary, wicked men, men of the very worst moral characters, sometimes have children, who avoid the sinful practices and examples of their parents, and support an excellent moral character. From fact and observation, therefore, it appears, that there is no fixed and invariable constitution in either case.

It is evident, therefore, on the whole, that the several arguments, in favor of the promise under consideration, from analogy, however ingeniously they were managed, do really conclude nothing in favor of such a promise. They would go as far in establishing known and allowed falsehoods, as the promise they were designed to support.

THERE are other considerations, besides those from analogy, which have been offered, in support of the promise, establishing a connexion, between parental

faithfulness and the piety and salvation of children. It is said, that the sacred scriptures do clearly teach such a doctrine.

THE promise, which God made to Abraham, is considered as a promise of that nature, and as transferred over to gentile believers. But it appears, from what has been already observed, that no such construction can be put on that promise. The promise contained no more, than the security of a church, for a certain time, in Abraham's family. The condition of the promise was, Abraham's faithfulness. But, in that promise, God never designed to comprehend, all the natural offspring of Abraham, although he were ever so faithful. Abraham was faithful, but the promises, as to their fulfilment were confined to a part of Abraham's posterity. Neither Ishmael and his posterity, nor Esau and his posterity, were included in the promise. They were neither permitted to inhabit Canaan, nor to form a part of the church.— Besides, the promise was a promise which was peculiar to former dispensations. But, it is unnecessary to enlarge here, as this promise has been so particularly considered, in the third section and elsewhere.

MANY other passages in sacred writ, are also supposed to contain, or teach the same promise. It will be both tedious and unnecessary, to attend to every particular passage, which may be supposed, in some way or other, to teach or imply such a promise. It may suffice to attend to some passages, on which the greatest stress has been laid; and to make such observations, as may apply to such passages in general, as are supposed to favour such a promise.

THE passages which have been mostly insisted on, are those in Deut. vii. 9, and Exodus xxxiv. 7. "*Know therefore, that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS.*" On the other hand, God proclaims himself a jealous God, "*Visiting the*

iniquity of the fathers upon the children, *and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*" These passages have been supposed to teach, with great explicitness, that the fate of children is suspended on the character of parents, by a divine constitution.

THE following observations may be useful, in ascertaining the meaning of these and other similar passages, in holy writ.

I. FROM a consideration of the nature of the supposed promise, it is extremely improbable, that these or other passages were designed to teach such a connexion between parents and children.

As a condition of the promise, it is said, that it is not only necessary, that parents should believe in Christ, as *mediator*, but in such a particular promise. If a parent be a believer in Christ, as *mediator*, yet he is not entitled to the promise, which secures faith and salvation to his children, unless he also believes in the promise, that God will save his children, if he be faithful in their education. See p. 100. Is it at all credible, that there should be a promise, so conditioned and qualified? Faith in Christ, as *mediator*, is *that* which distinguishes the friends of God from his enemies. It is *that*, by which the believer lays hold of the great and essential blessings of the covenant, so as to become interested in them. Now, that a faith so distinguishing and efficacious, as to his *own* salvation, should give no interest, in a supposed promise, respecting his seed; and that a belief in a particular promise, which comes not into the essence of faith, and may exist where saving faith does not exist, should absolutely connect with the salvation of his seed, is incredible. Faith in Christ, as mediator, is the condition of new covenant blessings; and not a faith in some particular promise. It is difficult to conceive, therefore, that a promise, so qualified, should exist or be found, in the above cited passages or any other.

But that no mistake may be made, I would observe.—

2. THAT if it may be determined, from the passages under consideration, that there is a covenant promise of saving blessings, to the children of pious and faithful parents, it must be concluded, also, that certain and inevitable destruction is secured, to the children of wicked and unfaithful parents.—It is as positively said, that God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, for four generations, as it can be supposed to be thought, that he will save the children of pious and faithful parents. If a promise of life to the one, be implied in one part of the words, a sentence of death is also contained in the other part. The declarations, in both cases, are equally positive.—But do fact and observation afford a support of such conclusions? Is there not reason, on the one hand, to conclude, that the children of wicked parents are sometimes pious? If so, fact contradicts the above-mentioned construction of those passages; although it will be conceded, that wicked parents have, no positive reasons to expect, saving blessings for their offspring.

ON the other hand, is there not all the evidence, which fact and observation can afford, in such a case, of the wickedness of some of the children of such parents, who were really pious? No more abandoned and wicked character is to be found, among the sons of Belial, than that in which Absalom, the son of the man after God's own heart, lived and died? It may be said, that notwithstanding the apparent and even real piety of parents, they may be very negligent in the education of their children. But what can be said, in cases where parents are very *famous* for their piety;—are declared, by God, to be *singularly* good, and yet have children, as *singularly* wicked and profane? But it is presumed, that no one will venture to affirm more, in the case of wicked and negligent parents, than that by such negligence, they eminently expose their children to ruin; and are taking the

most direct measures to secure it. If that be all, which can safely be inferred concerning wicked parents and their children, then more cannot be determined, in the case of faithful and pious parents, than that they are taking such measures, as have the greatest tendency, to secure the salvation of their children. The threatening is as positive and extensive as the promise. But,

3. IT is very evident, that it was not the design of the sacred writers, in the passages now under consideration, to suggest a single idea, concerning the *extent* of the covenant.

WHOEVER pays a particular attention to the connexion, between those words, in Deut. vii. 9. and what precedes, must be convinced, that the words were designed, to enforce a sense of the *faithfulness* of God in keeping a covenant which he had made, and not to show the *extent* of the covenant. In the preceding part of the chapter, Moses had been enumerating, the numerous favors which God had bestowed on the Israelites. He then said that God had done all this, "Because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers"—That God had for so long a time, and through so many generations, been punctual in fulfilling his covenant. Then come in the words, "*Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God he is God, the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy, &c. to a thousand generations.*" The faithfulness of God, is the great thing, which was designed to be enforced in those words—That he is not like fickle men, who soon forget their promises; but that he remembers his covenant, from generation to generation, even to the most distant period. It was altogether foreign from the design of Moses, to suggest an idea, relative to the *extent* of the covenant. It may be inferred from the words, indeed, that the covenant which God made with the fathers, had a respect to that generation; a respect similar to that which has already been described; but there is not

the least intimation, of such a promise, as connects the piety of parents with the piety of children. The plain and simple truth in view was, that God is a faithful God to keep covenant, and not to suggest a single idea concerning the extent of any covenant, which God had made.

SIMILAR observations may be made, on the other passage, which respects the wicked, taken in its connexion. There God asserts his determination to execute his threatenings. No one would choose to assert, that the design of those words was, to establish this as a truth, viz. That if any parent sustains a wicked character, that his children and his children's children, to the fourth generation, shall unavoidably be damned,

It appears from these observations, that the passages which have now been considered, never were designed to teach the existence of any such covenant or promise, as that which suspends the fate of children on the characters of parents; or absolutely connects the piety of faithful parents, with the piety of their children.

BUT it may be asked, what shall we make of the many declarations, which appear to promise and connect the piety of children with the faithfulness of parents?

Answer. Many of them, at least, have a respect to the generation of godly men.

As to others which have a respect to the natural offspring of the righteous, they are to be considered, as many other positive declarations are considered—As what may be hoped for and ordinarily expected. There is a declaration, which naturally implies, that children shall have long life, if they are obedient unto parents. And that wicked men shall not live out half their days. But wicked men, sometimes, live to a very great age; and obedient children are, sometimes, cut off in the beginning of their days. In 1st Timothy, iv. 14. Paul says to Timothy, “*Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.*”

In these words, there is a most positive declaration, that, in case Timothy should take heed to himself and his doctrine, he should save not only himself but his hearers. But, will any one understand them, as a covenant and promise, that if a minister is faithful to preach sound doctrine, he shall absolutely save *all* that hear him ! No one will understand more, by the words than this, that if a minister follows the apostles direction, he may hope and expect, to be savingly profitable to his hearers ; but, otherwise, he can have no reasonable expectations of it.—In the same sense, the declarations which are made, respecting the efficacy of parental faithfulness, are to be understood. Notwithstanding the declaration of the apostle Paul, there is reason to believe, that the wicked are not always “plucked away,” when the gospel is faithfully dispensed. There is the same reason to believe, that the most faithful exertions of parents are not always successful. The most pious parents have, sometimes, very abandoned children.

ON the whole, from the preceding observations it is evident, that there is no sufficient reason to believe, the existence of any such covenant or promise, as absolutely connects the pious and faithful exertion of parents, with the faith and salvation of their children. Faithful parental exertions are to be considered, as the most efficacious means of the salvation of children ; and, if parents are unfaithful, they have no positive reason to expect so important a blessing. Nevertheless, it does not appear, that God has, by any covenant, rendered the faith and salvation of children, absolutely certain, although parents are ever so faithful. And this construction of the promise does not render it uncertain, whether there will be believers in future, as is suggested, p. 25 ; for the promise of the Father to Christ, that he shall “see his seed,” and the promise of Christ to his church, that the “gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” afford perfect security, of such a number of believers, as shall be sufficient, to continue a church to the end of time.

SECTION VII.

The condition of the covenant, of grace ;—what is meant by being in covenant and the design of circumcision considered.

THE condition of the covenant of grace, comprehends those things, which are requisite to the enjoyment of a title to the blessings of the covenant. —A covenant ever supposes two contracting parties. In the covenant of grace, the parties concerned are God and men. In that covenant, God gives himself, conditionally, to men, as their God. The present inquiry, respects those things which are requisite, on the part of men, as the condition of enjoying God as their God.

It has been said, that parental faithfulness is the condition of the covenant, as the children of believers are respected. But it may well admit of a question, whether something further and more personal be not requisite? It is, indeed, said to be conceded on all hands, “That there is no promise that the Lord will be a God to any but *believers*.” Parental faithfulness, therefore, does not comprehend the condition of the covenant, respecting the children of believers; for, antecedent to such children having a title to the blessings of the covenant, they must be believers. No claims can be made to the blessings of the covenant of grace, or any other covenant, till the prescribed conditions are fulfilled.

WHAT is the condition of the covenant of grace? An answer to this question, although an important one, is easy. It is conceded, on all hands, that believing is necessary to a title, to the Lord, as our God. And it is certain, that “he that believeth shall be saved ;” or, inherit the blessings of the covenant. The term or condition, of enjoying a title to new covenant blessings, is the same, as it respects the Jew, as when it respects a Gentile—The same, respect-

ing high and low, great and small, rich and poor. But one condition is mentioned, either in the old Testament or the new. Circumcision, which was a token of Abraham's covenant-standing, was *a seal of the righteousness of his faith*. Faith was always enjoined, on Abraham's posterity, as the condition of the covenant; and they finally fell, through *unbelief*. The gospel enjoins *faith*, as the lowest, and yet a certain condition of pardon and salvation. It is difficult to account for it, how the natural offspring of Abraham came to be considered as the seed mentioned in the covenant, when the scriptures teach us, with so great explicitness, that it is being "Christ's" and having the *faith of Abraham*, which constitutes the *seed*,—the children which the covenant respects.

AGAIN; it is necessary to observe, that personal faith is requisite, to a personal title to the blessings of the covenant. The faith of one person, is never the condition of the covenant, respecting another. A believer may be made, a special means of the faith and salvation of another person; but, the faith of one person was never considered, as the condition, on which, another person should enjoy a title to new covenant blessings. It is said, "He that believeth shall be saved."

It is necessary to observe again; that it is the *actual existence and exercise* of faith, which is the condition of the covenant. A *proposal* of the covenant does not consummate a covenant-standing, or title to the blessings of the covenant; but it is the real existence and exercise of faith. Hence then, it may be concluded, that the condition of the covenant of grace is faith in Christ;—the *personal* existence and exercise of faith. It is indeed conceded, that, "No one can claim blessings stipulated to another. No one hath any right or claim to the blessings promised in the covenant, otherwise than upon a compliance with the conditions of the covenant. There is no propriety in speaking of an infant's right to baptism, or to any other blessing of the covenant of

“ grace, in virtue of any covenant whatever, established with its parent. We no where find any covenant subsisting betwixt God, and any particular person, which promiseth the blessing of the favour and friendship of God, otherwise than on the performance of certain conditions, on the part of the person with whom it is established.” p. 90, 91.

If the sentiments contained in this quotation are true, as they doubtless are, it must certainly follow, as is held forth in my former inquiry, that infants are not in covenant, by virtue of any covenant, existing between God and their parents; and consequently cannot be baptized, in token of their being in covenant.

I SHALL now proceed to consider, what is meant, by being in covenant.

By being in covenant, is meant, not only being under obligations to perform covenant duties, but having a title to the blessings of the covenant.—It does never mean, simply, that persons are *respected* in the dispensation, or tender of the covenant; for, if that were meant *all* who enjoy the gospel, whether believers or unbelievers, saints or sinners, would be in covenant.

AGAIN; being in covenant does not consist, in the bare enjoyment of ever so great external advantages, for securing the blessings of the covenant. External advantages may be enjoyed, in the most liberal manner, by such as will never enjoy the Lord as their God.

It may, finally, be observed, that being in covenant does not consist in ever so firm a security of faith, in some future time. All which could be said in such a case would be, that a person certainly will, in some future time be in covenant; but at present has no title to covenant blessings. Therefore, there is the highest impropriety in speaking of persons, as being in covenant, on account of any supposed security of faith in some future time; for, at present, they are not in covenant. Nothing short of an actual com-

pliance with or performance of the condition of the covenant, can give a title to its promises. And, nothing short of a real title to the blessings of the covenant, introduces any one into a covenant-standing. And, as faith is the condition or term of the covenant; so none but real believers have a real covenant-standing. Infants cannot be considered, as being in covenant, on account of any promise which may secure faith, in some future time; and especially before the condition of the supposed promise is performed; and above all, when there is no security of its ever being performed.

THE next inquiry respects the design of circumcision.

CIRCUMCISION, as a divine ordinance, was instituted, when God directed Abraham to keep his covenant, and as requisite to it. "*God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, &c. This is the covenant which ye shall keep, &c. Every man-child among you shall be circumcised, &c.*" Gen. xvii. 9, 10. It was therefore, as is generally believed, an instituted sign of the covenant, to be practised through the whole of that dispensation.—It may be observed further, that it was not designed, as a general token of a covenant, in which God was ready to transact with men; but it was an open and public sign, that the person, who *actively* submitted to it, was in covenant; or it was a sign, that the circumcised adult, at the time of its administration was in covenant, or a believer. Hence, of Abraham it is said, "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised." Rom. iv. 11. It was, doubtless, of the same import, respecting every circumcised adult. And it is conceded, that, "To the parent it was God's seal of the subject's title to eternal life. p. 33.*" And "Circumcision was a seal and

* In this quotation, circumcision is called *God's seal*. And in p. 71, it is called a seal, *on God's part*, as well as on the part of parents:

confirmation to Abraham of every blessing contained and expressed in that covenant of promise, of which it was a token or seal. p. 47. Circumcision then, as adults were respected, was a sign and seal of the sub-

Although the present inquiry, does not essentially depend on its being determined, whether circumcision were a seal, on the part of God and parents, or on the part of parents only; yet, it may not interrupt the main inquiry, if a few thoughts are here suggested, as reasons for the conclusion, that, as a seal of the covenant, circumcision respected *man* only. It is justly called God's covenant, because it originated from him, and was a sign which he instituted. But, that, as a seal of the covenant, it solely respected man, may appear,

1. Because man was solely *active* in the application of it.

The rain-bow in the heavens, was properly God's seal of the covenant; because it was something which he performed, in testimony of the truth, or in confirmation of the declaration he had made, not to deluge the earth again. But circumcision was performed by man, in confirmation, or as a token of his compliance with the covenant.

2. Another reason for the conclusion is, that the Deity had, by most positive declarations bound himself to be the God of Abraham and his believing seed, on the condition of their keeping covenant. The only thing wanting, therefore, was a test and mark of their keeping covenant. This is a reason for the conclusion, that circumcision was such a token.

3. The scriptures teach, with great explicitness, that circumcision, as a sign of the covenant, was wholly on the part of man. Particularly does this appear from Gen. xvii. 9, 11. Where God enjoins it on Abraham and his believing seed, to *keep covenant*. He also informs them, what must be done, viz. circumcise their males. Then the meaning of it is declared, viz. a *token* of the covenant, &c. i. e. A token of their keeping covenant, and so of the consummation of the covenant, betwixt God and them—As to God's keeping covenant, it did not admit of a question. But there needed some test or mark of the faithfulness, or covenant engagements of men. The covenant was proposed and tendered by God; nothing but man's compliance with it was needed; circumcision was a token of this. Besides, the Apostle Paul, evidently, considered the case thus, Rom. iv. 11. "And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a *seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had*, being yet uncircumcised." Circumcision, as a seal of the covenant, is considered in this passage, as having a sole respect to Abraham. It is from such a view of it, that circumcision under the old Testament was considered as a sign of *sanctification*, or the new Heart: And baptism, in the gospel, is considered as the sign of *regeneration*, and of *putting on Christ*; without so much as hinting, as I do not recollect it is ever hinted, that it signified any thing, relative to God's faithfulness in keeping covenant. From these considerations, there is reason to conclude, that circumcision and so baptism, as seals of the covenant, are seals on the part of believers only.—Whether this be a just conception of them or not, is not essential to the general inquiry under consideration; yet, it is not an inquiry altogether foreign to the subject.

ject's title to the blessings of the covenant; or of his *faith* and compliance with the covenant.

BUT, could it have the same design and import, respecting the circumcised infant? Could it when administered to an infant, be a sign and "seal of the subject's title to eternal life?" When "No promises whatever are made to the child." p. 90. Could it be a "confirmation of *every blessing* contained and expressed in the covenant of promise, as it was to Abraham; when infants were intirely passive, and had no promises sealed to them, as is asserted respecting baptized infants? p. 108. And could it possibly be a sign of the subject's title to eternal life, in the case of infants? when such infants "*are possessed of no other rights than those of unbelievers,*" 'till God is mercifully pleased to regenerate them, as is directly asserted, p. 108. It could not import the same thing on those principles, nor upon any other.—As the male-children of believers were to be circumcised, it must be, for some other purpose, as infants were respected, than that which was designed respecting the adult. The parent or adult was to be circumcised, as a *seal of the righteousness of his faith*. "To the parent it was God's seal of the subject's title to eternal life." But his male-children could not be circumcised, as a seal of any such thing; for they had no other rights than the children of unbelievers, as is asserted. If the infants of believers had no rights, no rights or titles could be sealed to them, without sealing a falsehood.

It appears, therefore, although it is thought an objection of weight against the scheme advanced in my former inquiry, that baptism was of a different import, when the child was respected, from the import it had respecting an adult, p. 33, that it must necessarily be so, even on the principles of the objector.

THE question still remains, what was signified in circumcision, as infants were respected? In my for-

mer inquiry it was insisted on, that it was a joint-token, with the parent's circumcision, of the covenant, or, that the parent did keep covenant with God. God required Abraham, as a requisite to his keeping covenant, to circumcise his male-children; And, at the same time declared, that this should be a token of the covenant between him and Abraham. Circumcision, it is granted, implied, the dedication of the male-child. And the dedication of children must be considered, as a discharge of a capital branch of the parent's covenant. And what, besides dedication, could be signified, respecting the child? No promises, it is acknowledged, were sealed to the child. Dedication, with all the obligations and duties which are implied in it, it is acknowledged was signified—All the covenant transactions which were sealed in it, it is acknowledged were between God and the parent, p. 107. And it is certain, that a parent could not have kept God's covenant without the circumcision of his male-child. It was, therefore, in its nature, a compliance with the covenant, in the parent. There was a propriety, therefore, in its being joined with a parent's own circumcision, as a seal or sign of his keeping covenant—Dedication only, could be signified respecting the child; for it had no covenant rights of its own, as is frequently acknowledged.—As a sign of the covenant, it must wholly respect the parent; for all the covenant transactions implied in it, were between God and the parent.—This conclusion might be formed, from the following declarations, “Whatever divine covenant there is respecting the seed and offspring of the righteous, it subsists *wholly* betwixt God and the *parent*—No promises whatever are made to the child—but, whatever promises there are, are to the parent.” p. 90.

THE foregoing observations may serve, to point out the design of circumcision, both as adults and infants were respected. They will, perhaps, be further confirmed, in a future section, concerning the end and design of baptism.

SECTION VIII.

The SEED respected in the Abrahamic covenant, or covenant of grace was a spiritual seed.

THE seed respected in the Abrahamic covenant, or covenant of grace, consisted of those, who had a title to the good things which were contained in it. Should it be admitted, that during the continuance of the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensations, the seed did consist of such only, as were natural descendants from Abraham, yet it could not be inferred from thence, that Abraham's natural seed were the seed respected in the covenant; because, something, over and above being a descendant from Abraham, was necessary to constitute the seed. Christ's true seed will consist of *men*, yet men, considered as men, cannot be called the seed; because, something over and above being simple men, is necessary to constitute the seed. The seed of Christ and the seed of Abraham do consist of those, who have a real title to the blessings of the covenant. The apostle Paul teaches this in express terms; Rom. iv. 16. "*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to ALL the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.*" According to the apostle, the seed under every dispensation, consists of those, who have a sure title to the promises. Besides, it is conceded, p. 45, that, "Whatever blessings were laid up in the promises for Abraham, were equally laid up for his seed.—" "Whatever security there was, that the Lord would be Abraham's God; there was the same that he would be the God of his seed. The promises were not singly to Abraham, but, they were to him and his seed." If this be the case, then the seed have the same interest and title to the promises, and the

same security of the good things promised, which Abraham had. Such and such only, therefore, as have that title and security which Abraham had, can be considered as the seed. The covenant considers and respects such as the true seed. But, had all the natural seed of Abraham, and have all the natural seed of believers, the same title to and the same security of the blessings of the covenant, which Abraham had! It is granted and expressly affirmed, that they have no other rights than the children of unbelievers, 'till God shall bestow converting grace upon them, p. 108.—It appears, from the words of the apostle Paul, and from the preceding quotation, that the seed respected in the covenant, consists of such and such only, who have as good, or as sure a title as Abraham had, to the blessings promised and secured in the covenant.

It remains, therefore, to point out, what *that* is which gives any one a sure title to the promises. If it can be determined, what *that* is which does give a sure title to the promises, it can be determined, with certainty, of whom the seed consists—who belong to it and are respected as such. It is certain, that being a child of Abraham according to the flesh, or a child of any other believer, never did give a title to the covenant, or mark any one as the seed; for this is expressly asserted; p. 16. And it is also said, that such have no more rights than the children of unbelievers, p. 108. And, in the preceding section it was shown, that personal believers only, have a sure title to the blessings of the covenant. And it is also conceded, “That there is no promise that the Lord will be a God to any but believers.” p. 15.

WHAT will be further attempted, in this section, will be, to make it evident, that faith in Christ is *that* which alone connects with the blessing of the covenant, and establishes that title to them, which Abraham had; and so that believers constitute the seed, which the covenant respects.—That the seed respect-

ed in the covenant, therefore, is a *spiritual* and not a natural seed. That this is the case appears from the following considerations.

I. IF faith were not necessary, to the enjoyment of a title to the blessings of the covenant, and to constitute the seed, then unbelievers might have, the same security of God for their God, which Abraham had.

If the promise is "*made sure to all the seed,*" and if the seed have the same title and security of the blessings of the covenant, which Abraham had, either the seed must consist of believers, and so be a spiritual seed; or otherwise *unbelievers* may have a *sure* title to pardon and salvation; even as sure a title as that which Abraham had. But, is that the language either of the old Testament or the new? If that were the case, why does the apostle Paul express himself in the following manner? "*They which are of FAITH, the same are the children of Abraham—They which be of FAITH are blessed with faithful Abraham. Ye are all the children of God by FAITH,* Gal. iii. 7, 9, 26. If unbelievers may have, as good a title to and as firm a security of the blessings of the covenant as Abraham had, why did Christ commissionate his disciples to go and preach, "*He that believeth not shall be damned!*"

If no unbeliever, whether a natural descendant from Abraham or not, can have a sure title to the blessings of the covenant, even as sure a title as Abraham had, then it will follow, as a certain consequence, that believers alone do constitute, and are respected as the seed; and consequently, that the seed respected in the covenant is a *spiritual seed*.

II. THAT the seed respected, in the covenant of grace, is a believing or spiritual seed is evident, as Abraham himself became entitled to the blessings of the covenant, by faith.

THE seed have the same title, to the blessings of the covenant, which Abraham had; and, if Abraham's title took place, through faith and on no other condi-

tion, it may be safely concluded, that believers only constitute the seed, or are respected as such. It is not to be supposed, that faith was requisite to secure covenant-blessings to Abraham, and not to his posterity—that there were different conditions of the covenant prescribed for Abraham, from those which were prescribed for others. That Abraham's title took place, through faith, cannot be doubted; and that the same thing is requisite, to constitute other persons his seed, is as certain. “*They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. They which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham.*” Gal. iii. 6, 9. As it was the faith of Abraham, which entitled him to the promises, and as it is faith which entitles others to them, and constitutes them his *children*, and introduces them to a title to the blessings of the covenant, it will follow that believers are the seed respected in the covenant, and that the seed, of consequence, is a spiritual seed.

III. THE same thing appears, from hence, as the natural seed of Abraham were not, as such, considered as the seed respected in the covenant. That is, whatever respect there was to Abraham's natural offspring, in the covenant God made with him, it is certain, that it did not constitute all his natural offspring the seed.—*Ishmael*, who was Abraham's child, was not considered as having any title to the promises, and was not respected in the covenant. This appears from Abraham's intercession, on his behalf. “O that *Ishmael* might live before thee. And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son, indeed; and thou shalt call his name *Isaac* and I will establish my covenant with him, for an everlasting covenant and with his seed after him. As for *Ishmael*, I have heard thee. Behold I have blessed him and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my COVENANT will I establish with *ISAAC*. Gen. xvii. 18—21 In God's reply to Abraham, he does not

say, that he *establisbes his covenant* with *Ishmael* ; but he does say, that he establisbes his covenant with *Isaac*, in distinction from *Ishmael*. He says, that he will bless *Ishmael*, by rendering him fruitful, &c. It is evident, from the whole tenor and complexion of the declaration, that *Ishmael* was not respected, in the promise, as one of the seed, who should inherit the promises.—In my former inquiry this was introduced, with a design to show that circumcision, as infants were respected, was not intended as a token, that such infants were in covenant ; because, *Ishmael* was circumcised as well as *Isaac*, when it was declared, at the same time, that *Ishmael* was not respected in the covenant.* The argument was not designed to show, that God, in the dispensation of his covenant, had not some special designs respecting Abraham's natural seed ; particularly that part of it, which descended from the loins of *Isaac*, *Jacob*, &c. But, that Abraham's natural posterity, as such, were not respected in the covenant, nor were circumcised in token of their covenant-standing. This it was supposed would be evident, from the consideration, that a part of his natural posterity were excluded, as in the case of *Ishmael*. This argument, it is believed, is a conclusive one, notwithstanding the objections which have been made to it.—It is said, by way of objection, “ It by no means appears, that *Ishmael* was excluded from the promise which God made to Abraham. We find—the same expressions are used relative to *his* death, as to the death of Abraham ; viz. “ *He was gathered to his people.*” To which it may be sufficient to reply. 1. Were it true, that *Ishmael* was not respected as one of the seed, because he was a natural descendant from Abraham, yet, if he ever became a believer he might inherit the essential blessings of the covenant. Although it was God's de-

* See my Inquiry, p. 21, 22.

fig, to collect a church from the posterity of Abraham, yet other nations, which were not respected in the promise, were not excluded from the blessings of the covenant, in case they should own the God of Israel as their God; as is evident from Exodus xii. 48, 49. If it were the case, therefore, that Ishmael did die a saint, it would be no real objection to the argument.

2. IT may be asked, whether it appears, that God did, in fact, establish his covenant with *Ishmael* and his seed, as he did with *Isaac* and his seed?

THE answer must be, that it does not appear; but it is evident, on the contrary, that God did establish his covenant with *Isaac*, in distinction from *Ishmael*. How can it be said then, that, "There is no evidence that *Ishmael* was not blessed with faithful Abraham, as really as *Isaac*?"

AGAIN; does it appear, that God had the same respect to *Ishmael's* offspring, that he had to the offspring of *Isaac*? Concerning *Ishmael*, including his posterity, it was previously declared "*He will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him.*" Gen. xvi. 12. And the apostle Paul, Gal. iv, 29—31, considers *Ishmael* and his posterity, as representatives of the enemies of Christ and his church. Were *Ishmael* and his posterity respected as the people, in whom the promises, which God made to Abraham were to be accomplished? Let facts determine. Was the saviour to proceed from the loins of *Ishmael*? Was the posterity of *Ishmael* ever designed to inherit Canaan? Was it the design of God to maintain his Church, in the family of *Ishmael*? This promise, of maintaining a church in Abraham's family, is supposed to be the promise, which comprehended Abraham's natural offspring, in such a sense, as to render it proper and suitable, that his males should be circumcised, in token of their interest in the covenant. But it is as evident, that God had no view to *Ishmael* and his posterity, in his

promise to support a church in the family of Abraham, as that he had no respect to them, as the people, who should inherit Canaan. The fact is, God never designed to include Ishmael and his posterity, in either of those promises; and accordingly the fulfilment of the promises never extended to them. But, on the contrary, agreeable to the prediction which was published, concerning Ishmael and his posterity, they have, through each successive generation, been under the influence of a spirit, so opposed to the law and the gospel, as has led them, to lift up their hands against every man. It is certain, therefore, that Ishmael and his posterity were not respected as Isaac was, in the promises which were made to Abraham.

It has been further said, respecting Abraham's importunity, on the behalf of Ishmael, "The Lord shewed favour to Ishmael, because he was Abraham's son; and for this reason the seal of the covenant, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee" was set upon him. Surely when the Deity made Ishmael an object of peculiar favour and blessing *because he was Abraham's seed*, this same Ishmael can, with very little appearance of reason, be produced as an instance in proof that the seed, in the promise had no relation to Abraham's *natural offspring.*" p. 49.

IN reply, it may be observed, in general, that Ishmael was not produced as an example to prove, that God's promise to Abraham had "no relation to Abraham's natural offspring;" but to shew, that it had no relation to Ishmael and his posterity; and consequently, that it was not a natural offspring which was respected as the seed: and therefore, that infant circumcision, which was extended to Ishmael, did not signify or import, that the infant circumcised was in covenant.† In the above quotation it is said, "The

† Had Ishmael been respected, in the promise, as Isaac was, God was under the same obligations to support religion among his posterity, as among the posterity of Isaac--The covenant secured gracious

Lord shewed favour to Ishmael because he was Abraham's seed; and for this reason the seal of the covenant; I will be a God to thee and thy seed, was set upon him." Upon which it may be inquired;—

1. How did God shew favour to Ishmael? Were the blessings he conferred on him the great blessings of the covenant? Why, then, was that discriminating clause added, "But my covenant will I establish with Isaac?" Is it not directly opposed, to the manifest import of the declaration made, concerning Isaac, to suppose that Ishmael was respected in the covenant, in the sense in which Isaac was respected? There is no pretext for saying, that Ishmael had the blessings of the covenant bestowed on him except what arises from God's promising him worldly prosperity. If promises of such blessings be an evidence of being peculiarly respected in the covenant, most certainly, such men as are in fact, prosperous in worldly matters, have a brilliant evidence of an interest in the covenant.

2. LET it be inquired further, whether it be true, that the reason, why God directed the seal of the covenant to be set on Ishmael was, because God had pronounced those favours on Ishmael, in consequence of Abraham's importunity?—Was not Abraham, directed to circumcise his male-children, and Ishmael among the rest, before those temporal blessings were conferred on Ishmael? He certainly was, as is evident from Gen. xvii. 10, 12. It was not for "*that reason*" that Abraham was directed to circumcise Ishmael. Had those blessings never been given, Abraham must have circumcised Ishmael, in obedience to a previous command. The favours bestowed, did not comprehend the blessings of the covenant, *I will be thy God*; nor did Abraham circumcise him, because God had pronounced those temporal blessings

qualifications to Ishmael's posterity as it did to Isaac's. But nothing can be more evident, than that none of these things were true, respecting Ishmael and his posterity.

on him; for he was expressly directed to do it, before any such blessings were given.

3. WAS circumcision, as Ishmael was respected, a seal of the covenant, "I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee?"—If it was, it was in the objector's view God's seal. God thereby engaged to be the God of Ishmael and his natural seed, in the same sense, that he engaged to be the God of Abraham and his natural seed. So that Ishmael and his posterity must be interested, in the same promise, in which Abraham and his natural seed were interested. The promise of Canaan—of having a Church maintained among them—of a descent of religion from parent to child; and of such gracious qualifications as were necessary to support a Church among them, &c. must respect them. But, God never sealed any such promises respecting Ishmael and his posterity; or at least, if he did, he never carried them into execution.

FROM these observations, it is evident, that Ishmael was not respected as the seed, in the covenant which God made with Abraham; even in that *remote* sense in which *Isaac* and his natural posterity were; yet he was circumcised.—Similar observations might be made, respecting *Esau*. But it is unnecessary to enlarge further on this argument.

4. IT may be concluded, that the seed respected in the promise made to Abraham was not his natural seed, from the command given to Abraham to circumcise his servants.

THAT there was such a command, does not admit of a doubt. But, if Abraham's natural seed was the seed respected in the promise, his servants could not have been circumcised, as belonging to the seed. They either must have been circumcised for some other reason, than to denote they were the seed; or, if they were circumcised as a token of their being the seed, it will be evident, that Abraham's natural seed, as such, was not the seed respected in the covenant.

It is insisted on, p. 50, 51, 52, that Abraham's

servants were not mere *patients* in circumcision; but were active and "received and practised circumcision upon the same principles that Abraham himself did." If this were the case, then they had a title to the promises, which was as valid as Abraham's title; and so were as certainly the seed, as were Abraham's natural offspring.—It will avail nothing to say, that Abraham's servants were supposed to believe, and so by faith became enrolled among the seed; for that would suppose, that believers of every nation were the seed, as well as the believers of Abraham's natural posterity. It is said, that Abraham's natural seed, were not, really, the seed, except through faith. If other men, who were not Abraham's natural offspring, even his servants, might also be received and treated as the seed, upon the same condition, then the seed, in reality, consisted of believers, whether they were Jews or Gentiles.—Besides, if Abraham's servants received circumcision, upon the same principles that Abraham did; then their seed must, on the principles of the objector, be respected as the seed, equally with Abraham's natural seed. It is insisted on, as appears from many quotations already made, that circumcision sealed a covenant, on God's part, respecting the natural seed of the adult, and secured faith and salvation to his seed, on the condition of his faithfulness; and, that Abraham practised circumcision on this principle. If Abraham's servants practised upon the same principle, and that by divine appointment, then their natural seed were as much respected as the seed, as the natural seed of Abraham.—On no principle, therefore, whether Abraham's servants were *agents* or *patients*, was Abraham's natural seed the seed respected in the covenant. On the principle of their being agents, and by faith becoming the seed, it is evident, that it was believing which distinguished the seed; and consequently that a spiritual seed was meant, by the term seed, as used in the promise to Abraham.

5. THE sacred scriptures, in the most explicit manner, teach, that the seed respected in the covenant and promise, is a believing and spiritual seed.

THE present inquiry is not, whether the seed which shall inherit the promises, will be selected from the natural seed of Abraham and of other believers; for it is, on all hands, conceded that a person may be a natural descendant from Abraham, or any other believer, and yet not belong to that seed, which shall inherit the promises. It must, therefore, be conceded, that it must be something over and above being the offspring of Abraham or any other believer, which composes, marks and distinguishes the seed. The present question is this, what that is, which marks and distinguishes the seed? That it is *personal character* and not *birth* or *parentage*, I shall now attempt to shew. Or to be more explicit, that repentance and faith are the distinguishing characteristics of the true seed. Indeed it is said, to be, "on all hands, conceded that there is no promise that the Lord will be a God to any but *believers*." And it is presumed it will not be denied, that the Lord will be the God of *all* such as do believe. Believing, therefore, must be the distinguishing characteristic of the seed. The seed, on these concessions, must extend to all believers, and can extend no further. Mankind, considered collectively, are the race of beings, out of which, this seed is to be collected; or, if the same might be said of any particular nation, yet, after all, the seed consists of believers and of them only. This is a plain doctrine of the gospel. It might naturally be expected, that the gospel would be clear and explicit, on so important a point. The Old Testament representations were clouded, with types and figures; but, as the gospel was written after the principal and most important character, which was respected; in all the types and figures of the Old Testament, was introduced, there was reason to expect, a more clear and full exhibition of the covenant of grace, and of the *seed*

which will heir its blessings, than had ever been given. And the gospel is as clear, on this important subject, as could reasonably be wished. And a title to the promises is universally put, on the condition of *repentance* and *faith*. The tender, of the blessings of the covenant, is made on that condition. The Jews flattered themselves, of being the favorites of God, because they descended from Abraham, or had Abraham for a father. But they were taught, not to expect to receive the blessings promised to Abraham, short of having the faith and doing the works of Abraham. The doctrine which Christ taught his disciples was, "He that believeth—shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." The Jews said to Christ, "*Abraham is our father.*" Christ replies, "*If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.*" John, viii. 39. Which teaches and implies, that the children, or seed of Abraham, had always consisted of those, who did his works; and not merely of his natural seed. It is observable, the description of the seed, given by the apostles always extended to believing Jews and Gentiles. Faith constitutes a Gentile, one of Abraham's seed, just as it did a Jew. Hence an apostle observes, "*We believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they.*" Acts, xv. 11. The only way in which the Gentiles might be saved, or share in the blessings of the covenant, was, most certainly, by faith. And if they were saved, and participated of the blessings of the covenant, as the Jews did, then faith always did distinguish and characterize the seed, respected in the promises.

THAT believers, or a spiritual seed, was the seed respected in the covenant, is very explicitly taught in Rom. ix. 7, 8. "*Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called; that is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*" It

is agreed, that the apostle uses the term *seed* in two senses. He, in one case, uses the term, to point out the natural offspring of Abraham. In the other case, he uses the term to point out those, who shall inherit the promises; which is the seed in question. And the apostle expressly says, that the children of the *flesh* are not the children of God, and are not counted for *that* seed; which shall inherit the promises. It is also agreed in, as is alledged p. 15, 16, that the apostle, in the place just now quoted, is answering an objection, which the Jews made to their being rejected; and that the objection was grounded on the idea, that the promises had a peculiar respect to them, as being the natural seed of Abraham. And the Jews, doubtless, put such a construction on the promises, as led them to conclude, that God was under covenant obligations to save them; and that they were the seed, merely, as being natural descendants from Abraham. The apostle, however, does not admit their construction of the promises.—He acknowledges, that the promises did respect them in such a sense, as that the *dispensation* of them, and of the law did appertain to them; or in one word, so as to confine that dispensation of the covenant to them. The apostle then explains the whole matter and says, “*They are not all Israel which are of Israel.*” That is, it was never God’s design to confer the blessings of the covenant, on *all* Abraham’s natural seed. Therefore it could not be said, if God should cast them away, that the word had taken none effect. He then explains his meaning thus; “*Neither because they are the seed (the natural seed) of Abraham, are they all children.*” That is to say, although God had promised Abraham, to treat particularly with his natural seed, and to raise up from them a Church and people for himself; yet, that does not imply, that all his natural seed were respected as *children*, who should inherit the promise. But it is said, “*in Isaac shall thy seed be called.*” In

these words, the apostle directly shews, that God's electing *Isaac* as heir, in whom the seed should be called, was an evidence, that the promise did not respect the whole-natural seed of Abraham; but some of a peculiar description. "*That is, they which are the children of the flesh* (natural descendants from Abraham) *these are not the children of God* (those who have a title to the promise) *but the children of the promise are counted for the seed;*" that is true believers. Therefore, none but believers could claim an interest in the promises. Consequently, on account of unbelief, they might be and in fact were, "broken off." But if it were the case, that Abraham's natural seed were the seed, in any sense which did not imply faith, they could not be "broken off," for their unbelief. If faith had not been the condition of the promises, and so *believers* the seed, *unbelief* could not, with any propriety, have been assigned as a reason for their rejection; or have been a justification of God's dispensation, in casting them off. But this is the sole reason, which is offered, for the rejection of the Jews. Because of unbelief they were broken off, Rom. xi. 20. The apostle, therefore, in answering the objection against the rejection of the Jews, proceeds on the very idea, that believers were the seed respected in the promise, in distinction from Abraham's natural seed, which makes it evident, that the seed respected was a spiritual seed.

THAT the seed respected in the promise made to Abraham, was a believing and spiritual seed is further taught, in Galatians, chapter iii.

FROM many things, contained in this chapter, it becomes exceedingly evident, that a believing or spiritual seed was intended by the seed, mentioned in the promise made to Abraham. It is said, p. 22, "That the apostle's primary and great object (in the chapter) is to prove, that sinners of mankind, be they either Jews or Gentiles, are justified by faith. Abraham himself, in whom all nations were to be

“ blessed, became entitled to the inheritance, which
 “ God lays up for his people, by faith.” If *believing*
 Jews and Gentiles compose the seed, and describe
 those who are entitled to the promises, it will follow,
 that believers must be the seed, and so that a spiri-
 tual seed is intended. This not only follows, from the
 declaration just quoted, but from many particular
 passages, contained in the chapter. Verse 7, the a-
 postle demands, “ *Know ye, therefore, that they which*
are of FAITH, the same are the children of Abraham?”
 In verse 9, he thus concludes, “ *So then, they which*
be of FAITH, are blessed with faithful Abraham.” In
 one verse he says, that they which be of *faith* are
blessed with Abraham; and in the other verse, that
 they are the *children* of Abraham. It was the design
 of the apostle to shew, not only, that believers com-
 posed the seed then, but always did; and that the
 natural offspring of Abraham never did compose the
 seed.—This appears, from the apostle’s explanation
 of the original promise. Verse 16, “ *To Abraham*
and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and
to SEEDS, as of many; but as of ONE, and to thy SEED
which is CHRIST.” Christ Jesus, who it is true, de-
 scended from Abraham, is here called the SEED, to
 which there is a reference in the promise, yea, on
 which it terminated. It is granted, p. 23; that
 Christ, when called the seed, was not spoken of as a
single person. “ The import can be no more than
 “ this, that none can inherit the blessings contained
 “ in the promises, otherwise than by Christ, and by
 “ being so *united to Christ*, who is himself the seed of
 “ Abraham, that they also may be considered, as A-
 “ *braham’s seed.*” In this passage, it is fully implied,
 that by being *united to Christ*, men become Abra-
 ham’s seed, in the sense of the promise. Conse-
 quently, that Abraham’s seed consists of those, who are
 particularly united to Christ. It is also implied, that
 when Christ is spoken of as the *seed*, it is designed to
 comprehend, in him, all true believers.—And this

appears to be the apostle's design, from the conclusion he makes ; Verſe 26—29, “ *For ye are all the children of God by faith in CHRIST JESUS ; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.—There is neither Jew nor Greek—there is neither bond nor free—there is neither male nor female ; for ye are all ONE in Christ Jesus. And if ye be CHRIST'S then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.*” The import of these words is this, that believing is *that* which constitutes and characterizes the seed of Abraham, without regard to nation or descent—to sex or condition. No words can more clearly express the characteristic of the seed, or heirs of the promises.—That the characteristic of the seed is not, on the one hand, being natural descendants from Abraham, or belonging to any particular nation or sex, or being freemen or slaves ; but on the other hand, being believers in Christ Jesus.

ON the whole, it is evident, that however particularly God dealt with the natural seed of Abraham, yet, that did not constitute them the seed ; but the seed comprehends believers of every nation and age, and believers only. Consequently, the seed respected, in the covenant, was a spiritual seed.

IT being thus evident, that the seed, respected in the covenant, was a believing and spiritual seed, this section will be closed with one general remark, on the impropriety of considering the children of believers, as being *visibly* in covenant, or visible heirs of the promises. If it be *visible*, it must appear to be the case. But what is it which renders it *visible* ? The scriptures teach, that believers compose the seed, and not a mere natural offspring. God no where says, that natural descent or parentage characterizes the seed, but *faith* only. If such children are *visibly* the seed, they are *visibly* such, directly contrary to the declaration of God.

SECTION IX.

The import and design, of infant circumcision and of infant baptism, more particularly considered; and objections answered.

AS to the import and design of circumcision and baptism, as adults are respected, it is generally, if not universally agreed in, that it is a seal and token of the subject's interest and title to the blessings of the covenant of grace. Or a token of faith and regeneration—the washing away of sins, &c.

THE present inquiry will, therefore, be confined to the import and design of circumcision and baptism, as circumcised and baptized infants are respected. And, from what has been observed, in the last section, it must be evident, that the ordinance of circumcision or of baptism, could not be designed to import the *same thing*, respecting an infant, which was imported, in the case of an adult. To the latter it is said, “It was God's seal of the subject's title to eternal life;” but the same thing cannot be sealed to an infant. This is, also, admitted; for it is said, “Being children of the flesh did not mark them as the seed to whom the Lord would be a God.” p. 16. And, “The children of believers are possessed of no other rights than the children of unbelievers.” p. 108. And, it appears, from the preceding section, that infants do not become the seed, and entitled to the blessings of the covenant, by being the natural offspring of believers. There is, therefore, no propriety in administering circumcision, or baptism to an infant, as a seal of its title to the blessings of the covenant, when it has no right or title to them, as it has not, merely, because it is a child of a believer. This is also conceded, p. 108; where it is said, “*Our having been the subjects of baptism in infancy, in which we were PERFECTLY PASSIVE, and in which NO PROMIS-*

ES were sealed to us, &c. If it be the case, that infants have "no right," and if baptism in infancy seals "no promises" to the infant, it certainly must have a very different import, respecting an infant, from the import of it, respecting an adult. This is a just consequence, from the concessions contained, in the quotations which have now been made: and, it is acknowledged, to be a just consequence, from the sentiment established in the preceding section. It is acknowledged, "If the promise implied nothing more, than that the Lord would be a God to all *who should believe*, in every age and nation; and that *all such* should be reckoned to Abraham as his seed, it will, then, be manifest that infant circumcision was a seal of no promise of blessings on the child: and if this be the light in which the scriptures truly lead us to consider the subject, it will be natural to suppose, that infant baptism is nothing more than a mark of parental dedication." p. 119. It is submitted, whether the most satisfactory proof, of such an import of the covenant, has not been produced, in the preceding section.

THE same thing cannot be sealed to an infant, in its baptism, as is sealed to an adult, when an adult is the subject of it. Although it is a token, in the case of an adult believer, of his faith and pardon, or title to eternal life; yet it cannot seal any such title to infants. This appears not only from the sentiments advanced in the foregoing section; but it is equally clear from the sentiments contained in the quotations, which have been made.

HAVING shewn, what cannot be designed by the circumcision or baptism of infants, a positive answer to the inquiry, will now be attempted.

HERE it may be observed, that although no titles to the blessings of the covenant can be sealed to infants, in their circumcision or baptism, as they have no such titles; yet it may serve to signify and seal the parent's titles, or interest in the blessings of the

covenant. That it implies *dedication* on the part of the parent, no one will doubt. It is acknowledged that "In order that Christian parents may take hold of the promises of the new covenant—they must cordially give them (their children) up *unconditionally* into the hand of God." p. 100. And it is doubtless true, as is asserted, p. 92, that, "Dedicating children to God, agreeably to divine appointment, implies a solemn engagement to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The baptism of children may be considered, therefore, as a public mark and token of a parent's compliance with his duty, in dedicating them to God. The parent cannot be said, to keep covenant with God, without such a dedication of his children.—The baptism of infants may be considered, therefore, as having the same import, respecting the parent, as his own baptism. It may, with propriety, be considered as a public token of his keeping the covenant; and of his engagements to perform the duties it enjoins. As to the child, it can be a token of no engagements or titles; for it makes no professions, and it has no titles. It is dedicated, and sealed or marked as such, according to divine appointment. Dedication, therefore, is peculiarly signified respecting an infant, and that the *parent*, who dedicates it, will keep God's covenant, as *he* is respected. It would be natural to conclude, that this must be the design and import of infant baptism, from some representations which are given of the transactions, although designedly in opposition to such an idea of it. It is said, "Whatever divine covenant there is respecting the seed and offspring of of the righteous, *it subsists wholly betwixt God and the parent.*—No promises whatever are made to the child." p. 90. And "*the covenant transaction, when baptism is administered to infants, is wholly betwixt God and the parents.*" p. 107. If it be the case, that the covenant transaction is wholly betwixt God and the parents, and the infants of believers have no covenant

rights, then, so far as the baptism of infants is a token of the covenant, it must respect the parent's covenant. If it signify, that any one concerned in the transaction, is in covenant and entitled to covenant blessings, it must signify it respecting the parent, in distinction from the child. And what confirms this idea of the transaction is this; that God declared to Abraham at the time infant circumcision was instituted, that it should be considered as a token of the covenant between God and him: and so between God and other believing parents, who should follow his example, in succeeding generations. And it is to be observed, that for the same reason it signified *dedication* as the child was respected, it was a token of the parent's compliance with the covenant, as the agent.

BUT, although it be thus evident, that infant baptism is designed, as a sign or token of the parent's or dedicator's covenant, as the covenant is wholly betwixt God and the parent; and that as the baptized infant is respected, its solemn dedication and separation for God is signified; yet such a conclusion meets with objections, to which it is necessary to attend.

It may be necessary, however, to make one general observation previous to answering objections. The observation is this, that positive institutions are of such a nature, as that it is impossible, in every respect, to account for them, from reason and the nature of things. Difficulties may, therefore, occur, which are inexplicable to men; because they cannot see as God sees, or enter into all the reasons of the divine conduct, respecting positive injunctions. However, it is apprehended, no such difficulties will occur, in the following objections to what has been advanced, concerning the import and design of infant baptism.

OBJECTION I. IF the account which has been given of baptism be true, "It was of an import perfectly different when applied to the child, from that

“ which it was of when applied to the parent. To
 “ the parent it was God’s seal of the subject’s title to
 “ eternal life; to the child a seal of no blessing or
 “ good whatever.” p. 33.

ANSWER. So far as the different import of baptism, relative to the parent and the baptized child is respected, which is the principle set up in the objection, it is readily admitted. But, what if the import of it respecting them be different? Is it not necessary to adopt such a conclusion, from a consideration of the different circumstances of the subjects, concerned in the transaction? The parent is alone *active*; the infant is “ wholly passive.” The parent actually exercises himself, in a compliance with the covenant, in both cases.—The infant has no exercises in either case. The parent is considered as being, in fact, in covenant and entitled to its blessings——The infant has no rights whatever. Is it possible, that the import should be the same in both cases, respecting the subjects! To the parent it is said, to be God’s seal of the subject’s title to eternal life. But can it be a seal of an infant’s title to eternal life, when it is admitted, on all hands, that it has no title? On such a supposition, it must be, an instituted seal of an allowed falsehood! Besides; although such an objection is supposed to have weight, against the scheme advanced in my former inquiry; yet what is advanced, as the real ground of the objection, is admitted by the objector, as being true. It is acknowledged (p. 47.) that “ Circumcision was a seal and confirmation to Abraham of every blessing contained and expressed in that covenant of promise of which it was a token.” But when treating of baptism in infancy, it is directly asserted, that in it “ no promises were sealed to us.” p. 108. The objection, therefore, if it can be considered as such, lies equally against the objector’s scheme, as against the scheme advanced in this and my former inquiry.

OBJ. II. ACCORDING to the account which has been given, of the design of infant baptism, "It did not, nor was it ever designed to form any distinction between the circumcised or baptized infant, with respect to any relation it bore to God, his Church, his covenant or his kingdom, and those of unbelieving parents, or, of the whole heathen world." p. 32.

ANS. THIS objection, so far as it has a respect to the personal rights and claims of the baptized child, can have no weight in it, even in the view of the objector. In reference to the rights of such a child it is said, when "God is mercifully pleased to bestow regenerating grace upon the child, it then becomes possessed of the same right to the promises and blessings of the covenant of grace that his parents had before him. But, until then, the children of believers are possessed of no other rights than those of unbelievers." p. 108. It is further said, that baptism in infancy does not "give us any more right, when we come to adult age, to be considered, received and treated as *christians* and as being ourselves in covenant with God, than if we never had been baptized." (Ibid.) The same thing is expressly admitted in the objector's scheme of baptism, so far as the personal rights of baptized children are respected, as is contained in the objection under consideration. However, if the objection be well founded, and be a real objection, it ought to be obviated.

In general it may be observed, that the objection is not true, in any sense in which it can be considered as an objection of consequence.

1. It is a mistake, that infant baptism according to the scheme advanced in this and my former inquiry, sets up no distinction between the baptized child and the children of heathen.

THERE is, most certainly, this distinction between them. The one is solemnly dedicated to God; but it is not the case, as to the children of heathen.—

There is, also, an important distinction, which relates to their religious education. As to the baptized children of believers, their religious education is secured, as far as the most solemn transactions and engagements can secure it. In the very transaction, the parent, in the most solemn manner, engages to educate his children for God; and the very ordinance is a sign and seal of his engagements. Besides, the united efforts of the whole Church are secured; for the Church, as a confederated body of christians, is engaged, by covenant, to see to it that parents are faithful, in the education of their children, as well as in other respects.

2. IT is also a mistake, when it is said, that on the scheme of baptism, which is advanced in the preceding section, there is no difference formed between baptized children and the children of heathen, respecting the Church.

ALTHOUGH the Church, as such, has no special respect to the heathen world; yet it has a most sacred respect to baptized children. And, although, neither on the objector's scheme, nor on that which has now been advanced, baptized children, as such, are to be considered as distinct and personal members of the Church; yet, they certainly have such a special relation to it, as cannot be pretended, respecting the children of heathen.

3. IT is a mistake in the objector, when it is urged, that there is no distinction formed, on the scheme now advanced, between baptized children and the heathen world, respecting the Kingdom of God.

THERE is, indeed, a very important distinction, in favour of baptized children. They stand a fairer chance for the kingdom of God, than can be pretended, concerning the children of unbelievers. If the enjoyment of the best means, forms a favourable distinction relative to the kingdom of God, then the children of believers have an important distinction in

their favour. Their parents are christians—have dedicated them to God, and have set up a memorial of their covenant engagements. Besides, the fidelity of the whole Church is engaged, to secure the most faithful exertions for their good. In a word, if the security and enjoyment of the best means, has a favourable aspect on the welfare of children, and opens a favourable prospect relative to their salvation, there is an important distinction in the case of baptized children respecting the kingdom of God, which cannot be pretended respecting the heathen world.

FROM these observations it appears, that the objection is wholly founded in mistake. If it were not, it is equally an objection to the objector's scheme.—For, although the objector supposes, a certain promise to be sealed, in the baptism of children, which secures their salvation; yet it is a conditional one;—the conditions are not fulfilled, at the time baptism is administered; and there is nothing in the covenant, which secures a fulfilment of them.

OBJ. III. “If circumcision when applied to the
“ infant, sealed no promise whatever except to the
“ parent, and, these respecting only his own salva-
“ tion; how could the child's being afterwards a
“ breaker of the law invalidate the parent's claim to
“ the promises of that covenant of which circumcisi-
“ on was a seal, and so become uncircumcision?”

P. 34. —

ANS. IT is neither asserted nor implied in the scheme which has been advanced, nor in the words of Saint Paul, to which there is a reference, in the objection, that if the circumcised child should break the law, the parent's claims would be invalidated, unless owing to the parent's negligence; and so it imply a breach of covenant in the parent. The parent's covenant-claims, always did and ever will depend on his own exercises; but the child's being a breaker of the law, never was supposed on any scheme, to invalidate a parent's covenant-claims.

According to the scheme which has been advanced, the circumcision of an infant, was a sign of the parent's covenant title, as he alone was active in it, and the child wholly passive. The circumcision of the *parent*, therefore, could become uncircumcision in no way, but by *his* breaking of the law. The objection, therefore, derives all its plausibility, respecting the scheme it was designed to oppose, from mistake.—Besides, the objection may be retorted on the objector's own scheme; for in p. 90, it is asserted, "Whatever divine covenant there is respecting the seed and offspring of the righteous, it subsists wholly betwixt God and the parent." Again, it is said, "Our having been the subjects of baptism in infancy, in which we were *perfectly passive*, and in which no promises were sealed to us," &c.—It may then be asked, how, on these principles, a child's being a breaker of the law, invalidates his *own* claims, when he has none; and especially, since the condition of the covenant is parental fidelity? But, whether the objector's scheme be liable to the objection or not, it is presumed that the scheme now advanced does not suffer from it.

OBJ. IV. IF the baptism of an infant, as a token of the covenant, respects the parent only, and dedication be signified respecting the infant, "We can discover no way, in which baptism in infancy ever did or ever can, become a sign or mark of any covenant-relation to God, or God's seal of the righteousness of faith, and of the benefits and blessings of the covenant of grace to the subject." p. 32.

ANS. ON the same ground and with equal justice may it be said, that if, in the baptism of an infant, the covenant which was sealed was "wholly betwixt God and the parent;" and the infant, being "*wholly passive*, no promises were sealed to the child," no way can be discovered, how the baptism of an infant should become a sign of its right to the blessings of the covenant, or a seal of the righteousness of faith.

as the subject is respected. Those considerations which will relieve the objector's scheme from this objection, will also relieve the scheme, contained in this and my former inquiry.—And the objector, it is confidently believed, has suggested some considerations which will obviate the difficulty. p. 108 it is said, “When in answer to the faith and prayers of parents, God is mercifully pleased to bestow converting grace on the child, it then becomes possessed of the same rights to the promises and blessings of the covenant of grace that his parents had before him. But, until then the children of believers are possessed of no other rights than the children of unbelievers.” It is here supposed, that the infant, at the time of its baptism, had no rights of its own, any more than if it had been the child of an unbeliever. And it is said, in the same page, that *no promises were sealed to the child*; yet it is asserted, that when the child is afterwards converted, or becomes a believer, he is to be viewed and considered, as having as real and personal a right to the blessings of the covenant, as his parents had before him. If so, then for the same reason, his baptism may obtain a personal significancy; and be considered as a seal of the righteousness of his faith. The child's being brought to the exercise of faith, and a personal compliance with the covenant, and to engage obedience to its requirements, it may, with propriety, give a personal signification to his baptism in infancy. It is a proper time to consider it as a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith; when there is evidence that such a faith does exist. On the objector's scheme, antecedent to such a faith, the baptized child cannot be considered as having any other rights, than the child of an unbeliever. On the existence of faith, it is said, the baptized child is to be considered as having the same title to the promises, that its parents had before him. And there is certainly as good a reason for the personal application of the sign and

seal of the covenant, as for a personal application of the promises themselves.

OBJ. V. It is said, that Antipædobaptists, although they will in general agree in it, that all parents are under obligations to *dedicate* their children to God; yet they will ask, what obligations a parent can be under, to bring his child to baptism, upon the scheme which has been advanced? This covenant was long since sealed in his own baptism. He will further demand, what propriety there can be, in setting that seal on children or infants, if they are not comprehended in the covenant, when baptism is acknowledged to be a seal of the covenant? p. 118, 119.

ANS. THE first thing to be attended to, in answer to this objection is, the difficulty contained in the following question; What obligations are parents under to bring their children to baptism, if it be only a parent's covenant which is sealed in it?

ANS. 1. IF it be a divine institution, that children as well as parents should be baptized, whatever is signified by it, parents must be under the same obligations to offer their children in baptism, as they are to submit to the authority of God, in any other case;—the same as they are to submit to baptism themselves.

ANS. 2. ANOTHER reason why parents should offer their children in baptism, although it be a seal of the parent's covenant is, the parent's covenant cannot be complete without it.—If the baptism of children be a joint-token with a parent's own baptism, of his keeping God's covenant, then the parent must be under the same kind of obligations to dedicate his children, as he is to dedicate himself in baptism. Although, previous to becoming a parent, a person may have dedicated himself in baptism; yet should he neglect to dedicate his children, after he had become a parent, he would, as truly break the covenant, as Abraham would have done, had he neglected to circumcise his males. The sign of the covenant, re-

specting himself, could not have been complete without it.

BUT it is further demanded, what propriety can there be, in applying that, which is acknowledged to be a seal of the covenant of promise, to one, who is not comprehended in it?

ANS. 1. THERE would be no propriety in applying the seal of the covenant to one, who is not comprehended in it and has no title to the essential blessings of it, provided a personal title was signified in it. Or, if baptism is to be considered as a token of the covenant, as the baptized infant is respected, there would be no propriety in applying it to infants, or such as have no personal title to its blessings. It would, in that case, be solemnly sealing a falsehood. But then it will be remembered, that such an objection would be applicable to the objector's scheme, and not to the scheme advanced in this and my former inquiry. Upon the scheme which the objection is designed to oppose, the token or seal is supposed to have respect to the believing parent who dedicates his infant; and that dedication only is signified respecting the infant. All which is true on every principle.—Therefore,

2. THE propriety of applying the seal to children, although they are not in covenant, appears, as the dedication of children is such a capital branch of the parent's covenant, that it cannot be complete without it.—It was such a signal evidence, of Abraham's covenant faithfulness, that he would "command his children and household after him," as that God said, he *knew him* by that very thing. Gen. xviii. 19. As the faithful dedication of children, is so distinguishing a mark of a parent's covenant faithfulness, there is, in the nature of the case, a propriety in setting the sign of his keeping covenant, as it were, on the forehead of his children.

3. ANOTHER consideration, which shews the propriety of baptizing infants, on the scheme advanced

in the preceding section, is the use and design of seals. —SEALS are not used, solely, to make over and confirm blessings ; but they are used, also, to indicate and mark property. The husbandman sets his seal or mark, upon the horns of his oxen and the hoofs of his horses ; not to confirm them as the property of another, but as a mark of their being his property. The merchant sets his seal on his goods, to denote that they belong to him. From this use of seals there appears a propriety in God's directing his seal to be placed on the children of believers ; for they are God's, not merely by creation, but they are dedicated and consecrated to his service.

FROM these observations, it appears, that there is a propriety in the baptism of infants, although they have, personally, no covenant titles ; and although, as a sign of the covenant, it is alone applicable to the parent, who dedicates them. It is equally clear, that there would be no propriety, on the scheme of the objector, of baptizing them as a token of their having any title to the promises, because they have no such title.

OBJ. VI. THE scheme, advanced in this and a former inquiry, is subversive of the practice of infant-baptism.

THIS objection, although it has been made in no publication, has been more privately circulated, as an objection to the scheme advanced, in my former inquiry. The objection was then particularly considered.* It is freely acknowledged, that the principle on which the arguments in favour of infant baptism have commonly been formed, viz. that the children of believers are in covenant, is given up as indefensible. Or in other words, the real design of infant baptism, is considered in a point of light, somewhat different from the usual manner of treating it.

* See my Inquiry, p. 47—61.

Yet, that it is a divine institution is fully asserted. And, instead of weakening the evidence, in favour of such a practice, it is believed, that the principle advanced in the scheme, does tend, above every other hypothesis, to vindicate it. If the design of baptism, as infants are respected, be to signify their dedication to God and not their personal title to the blessings of the covenant, the very sinews of the objections, which have usually been made to the practice are cut. The objections of Antipædobaptists have been chiefly aimed, against the covenant-standing of infants—their want of faith, &c. But on the scheme advanced in this and a former inquiry, all such objections are impertinent. Every one must acknowledge, that the dedication of children is a reasonable duty; and, that it is also reasonable, that such a dedication should be signified in suitable ways. No man's conscience can object to it.

SOME attempts have been made, to prejudice the minds of the less discerning, against the practice of infant baptism, because the advocates for it are not agreed, in all respects, relative to the design of it. In a late publication, there is the following remarkable passage. “How many are the inventions of men! Mr. Emmons and Mr. C. Strong say, infants are not members of the visible Church; and that no covenant relation doth exist between God and children, on account of their being children of believing parents;” but that they ought undoubtedly to be baptized on some other account. Dr. Hopkins and Dr. West say, that the seed mentioned in the promise to Abraham, respected and comprehended his natural posterity; and if parents dedicate their children to God, by baptism, as they ought, taking hold of the covenant for them by faith; and performing their duty towards them in other respects; as they may and as many parents have done, their children shall certainly be saved; and therefore the children of believing parents are

“ to be baptized ; altho’ they do not promise them
 “ the earthly Canaan. Dr. *Lathrop* and Mr. *Will-*
 “ *iams* have some other scheme. And how many
 “ other schemes there are, I know not. But one
 “ thing is evident. If a house divided against itself
 “ cannot stand infant baptism must surely fall.”† It
 was, undoubtedly, the design of the writer in the
 above quoted passage, to bias the minds of others a-
 gainst the practice of infant baptism ; as well as to
 suggest a sufficient reason for his renouncing it him-
 self. The argument is this. Those who have be-
 lieved the practice of infant baptism to be divinely in-
 stituted, have been divided in their sentiments con-
 cerning its end and design. Therefore, it must surely
 fall. The principle, on which this argument is found-
 ed, would be fatal, in its operation, to every doctrine
 of religion, whether natural or revealed.—The advo-
 cates for the doctrines of *original sin*, *regeneration*,
justification by faith, &c. have had very different con-
 ceptions of them, as appears from the different ex-
 planations which have been given, by different per-
 sons. Shall we then conclude, that those doctrines
 must surely fall !—The gospel revelation has been be-
 lieved, by the whole christian world ; yet there is
 not a doctrine, nor an institution, concerning which
 there has not been different conceptions. May not
 a Deist then rise up, with a bold face and say, with
 as good a grace as it is said in the above quotation,
 if a house divided against itself cannot stand, the
 christian system must surely fall !—Almost all man-
 kind have believed in the being of a God ; yet they
 have entertained very different conceptions, and jar-
 ring opinions concerning his nature and perfections.
 Must it then be concluded, that the fundamental doc-
 trine of all religion must surely fall ! Must we all turn
 Deists and Atheists !—It cannot escape the notice of
 an attentive mind, that the argument, contained in

† See Mr. Roots’s Letter, p. 105.

the above quotation, cannot stop short of universal scepticism, if pursued. Therefore, if there are any, who have found, that their minds have been influenced by it, it is high time for them to take a review of the matter; for a mind which will yield to such an argument, is exposed to every kind of error, and prepared to swallow the grossest absurdities.—The author, on a review of such a measure to influence his own mind or the minds of others, must see, that however well meant the argument might be, yet it is in fact making use of a weapon, which is fatal to every truth.

BUT to return; it does not appear, that the scheme advanced in the preceding section, has the least tendency to weaken the evidence in favour of the practice of infant baptism; but, on the contrary, it serves to reconcile it with reason, and with every part of revelation. If the objection is only designed to suggest, that the practice of infant baptism is placed in a different point of light, from what it has sometimes been, it is acknowledged; yet it is believed at the same time, that it is put on such an issue, as that it is capable of a much better defence, than on any other view of it.

OBJ. VII. THE scheme of baptism, advanced in this and a former inquiry, is calculated to gratify the careless feelings, natural prejudices and biases of the human mind—There is not that mortification and self-denial implied in it, as is implied in that scheme of baptism, which considers children as comprehended in the covenant made with parents; and that their welfare is suspended on parental fidelity, &c. and, therefore, it is not a scheme so conformable to the genius of the gospel.

THIS objection is not stated at large, in any particular paragraph; but several suggestions of such a nature are contained in p. 116, 117.—

ANS. IT is by no means conceded, that the scheme is liable to such an objection. In regard to *dedica-*

tion, where do the corruptions of the human heart most naturally appear? Upon the scheme advanced in the last section, parents are required to dedicate their children to God, to be disposed of according to his sovereign pleasure, without pretending to know how God will dispose of them, altho' parents should be ever so faithful.—Upon the objector's plan, parents give them to God, believing, that if they are faithful, God will certainly save their children.—Which of these schemes are most trying and self-denying—most opposed to selfish feelings? Which of them puts faith and resignation to the severest trial? Fidelity is solemnly engaged in both cases. In one case, it is engaged absolutely without any assurances, that God will save such children, or pretending to know, how God will dispose of them; but they are given up *unconditionally* to the Lord. In the other case, children are given to God, under the impression and in the belief, that God will save them. In which of these two cases is submission put to the greatest trial? It must be in the former.

UPON the scheme advanced, in the preceding section and my former inquiry, parents are subject to discipline, and are holden to faithfulness in the most rigid manner. In case of negligence, they not only expose their children to ruin, but they expose themselves to be cast out of the families of Christ. And, although their children are not considered as personal and distinct members of the Church, yet, through the medium of their parents, they are subject to a discipline, which is peculiarly painful and trying.—They are laid under a necessity of being moral, if parents are faithful; or, of being declared incorrigible, and as such given over to ruin. †——The scheme, in this respect, is far before that which, although it requires dedication, yet, gratifies the selfish feelings of the dedicator, so far as to contain assurances of

† See my former inquiry, Sect. 9.

just such an issue, as his private feelings would dictate. And, although the scheme of the objector, requires a discipline, which may terminate in the rejection of the baptized child; yet it in no case requires of the parent, the painful and mortifying task of bringing his own child, which is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, and declaring, before the Church, that this his son is a glutton, a wine bibber, &c. an incorrigible son, who will not obey the voice of his father or mother; and who has already wearied their patience and baffled their most faithful efforts. On the whole, it is confidently believed, that the objection, under consideration, is misplaced.

OBJ. VIII. THE scheme of baptism which has been advanced, detracts from the importance of the institution of baptism;—renders it in a great measure useless, and leaves very few motives to the practice of it; especially as infants are respected.

ANS. IT is acknowledged, that the scheme does not raise up the ordinance of baptism above every other institution; yet, it is by no means, justly liable to this objection. This will appear from the following considerations.

1. WERE there no visible advantages arising from baptism, either to parent or child, yet there would be motives remaining, for a serious attendance on it, which are of the greatest weight in the view of good men; who are well informed and not influenced chiefly by selfish considerations. A love to God, and respect to his authority will ever induce good men to regard it, as an important institution.

2. THERE is as important an end answered, by the baptism of children, on the scheme which has been advanced, as in the baptism of an adult.—The same end is answered; for the baptism of children is an evidence or token, that the parent keeps covenant, as well as the parent's own baptism.

3. SEVERAL particular considerations, besides those which have been mentioned, shew that the institution

of baptism, as it is represented in the preceding section, is useful and important, and that there are solemn motives to the practice of it, respecting infants.

First ; It has an important tendency respecting the world at large.—It is one special means of keeping the covenant, in which God is ready to transact with mankind, in view. It brings up and keeps alive an inquiry, relative to the meaning of the transaction, and the import and nature of the covenant, which is respected in it.

Secondly ; THE institution, as it has been explained, has a very important tendency relative to *parents*, who dedicate their children in baptism.

It being a sign of dedication, and of parents' most solemn engagements, respecting their children, it serves to impress and perpetuate on their minds, a sense of their obligations to bring up their children for God —

Thirdly ; THE institution of baptism, as it is represented in the preceding section, is important, as baptized children are respected.—It has a most direct tendency to impress God's covenant on their minds. It brings it much nearer to them, than it would otherwise be. Although it does not import, that they are in covenant, yet it brings the covenant into view ; it is written on their foreheads. In this view of it, it promotes the general good ; and serves to perpetuate the memory of the covenant, and to awaken attention to it. It is posted up, as it were, at every corner. The institution, therefore, is important for parents, for children, and for the world in general.

Fourthly ; THAT the baptism of infants is important, on the plan which has been advanced, further appears, as it is connected with the most efficacious means of their salvation.

PARENTAL fidelity is considered, on all hands, as a most important means of the salvation of children. Parents, if faithful, may do more towards rendering children pious and happy, than can be done by any

other persons. By faithful and vigorous exertions, they may hope and expect, that their children will walk in the way they should go. And the fidelity of parents is secured, in the best manner, by the institution of baptism. In the dedication and baptism of their children, they solemnly covenant and engage, to train them up for God; and the token and mark of their engagements is impressed, on the foreheads of their children, that they may be forever in view.— Besides, the fidelity of the whole Church will be exerted, to animate parents to act with vigor and resolution. In addition to these considerations, on the scheme which is advanced in the preceding section, baptized children have the most solemn inducements, to be attentive and teachable; for they are to consider, that their salvation is depending on personal exercises, and not merely on the faithful exertions of their parents.

IF it should be said, by way of objection, that although it be true, that there are many things, on the proposed plan, to secure parental faithfulness, yet there is no covenant security of it; the answer is, although it be true, that parental faithfulness is not secured by any covenant, yet it stands on a level, in this respect, with the plan which is opposed to it; for on that plan, it is not pretended, that parental faithfulness is secured by covenant.

BUT it may be inquired, whether, if there were a promise of the salvation of children, on the condition of parental faithfulness, and so if parents were assured, that the fate of their children was suspended on their fidelity, it would not greatly animate them?

ANS. SUCH a promise might, in some views of the case, animate and quicken parents to faithfulness; as absolute promises of success, in promoting the salvation of men, might animate ministers of the gospel to be faithful in preaching it; yet no such promises are made in the latter case, although a very important one; and from what been said it appears, that there is no such promise in the former case.

BESIDES ; it admits of a very serious doubt, whether, if there were a promise in the case of parents, qualified as the impleaded promise is, it would not, instead of animating them, sink them down into a state of despondency. If a believing parent considered his own salvation, as suspended on his perseverance in holiness, and that there was **no** grace secured in the covenant to ensure his perseverance, would he not sink under those views? It deserves a serious inquiry, at least, whether, if parents were to consider the fate of their posterity to be suspended on their faithfulness, a faithfulness which is not common to believers, nor secured by any covenant, they would not absolutely despair under the apprehension? At least; they would conclude, on the whole, that there were no greater prospects of the salvation of their children, than if it were suspended, as it really is, on the personal repentance and faith of children, as the condition; because in either case, the salvation of children would depend, on the sovereign and unpromised interposition of God.

BESIDES ; would not the supposition, that the salvation of children was absolutely suspended on the faithfulness of parents, have a most *pernicious* influence on children, if it might be supposed to animate parents?

DID children believe the doctrine, would they not conclude, that their own attention and concern would be unnecessary? They have a violent natural propensity to negligence; and if they believed in the doctrine, that their salvation was suspended on the condition of their parents' fidelity, although they might consider it as highly important, that their parents should be faithful; yet, would they not conclude, that their own personal attention and activity were needless? It is a question, therefore, whether the supposed promise would, on the whole, have any useful tendency? It really implies no greater security of parental faithfulness, than is implied in the other scheme;

and it has as direct a tendency to render children *careless*, as it has to *animate* parents. Besides, it appears that God has never seen fit to make such a promise.

It appears, on the whole, from the observations which have been made, that the institution of infant baptism, as it has been represented, in this and in my former inquiry, is not only reasonable, but useful and important; and, therefore, that there are most weighty motives to practise it.—And, it is presumed, that the scheme is not justly liable to any of the preceding objections.

SECTION X.

Concluding remarks and observations:

IF it be a truth, that the children of believers are not in covenant, and are not to be baptized in token of their title to the blessings of the covenant, but as a mark and token that their parents will keep covenant, and that their children are dedicated to God, it will follow as a consequence, that baptized infants are not to be considered, as personal and distinct members of the Church: and, that their connexion with the Church, must be through the medium of parents. And, as baptized children are connected with the Church, in that way, so the discipline which is to be exercised respecting them must, also, be through the medium of their parents. These remarks are justified by many concessions. It is said, “Our having been the subjects of baptism in infancy, gives us no right to baptism for our infant seed. “Nor doth this give us any more right, when we come to adult age, to be considered, received and treated as christians, and as being ourselves in covenant with God, than if we never had been bapti-

“zed.” p. 108.—The preceding remarks are so obvious, that nothing need to be said, to illustrate them. If any wish for a further illustration of them, they are referred to my former inquiry; sections, 7, 8, 9.

BEFORE this inquiry is closed, after having obviated the objections to the scheme advanced in this and my former inquiry, it may not be improper to add a few remarks on the plan which has been opposed to it.

And,

1. IT concedes the fundamental principle, on which the scheme held forth in my inquiry, is founded.

THE principle alluded to is this, that the children of believers are not in covenant and so not to be baptized in token of their being in covenant. There are many things advanced to shew that they are *respected* as the seed; but after all, it is granted, that they have no promises made them, nor any more rights than the children of unbelievers.

2. THE scheme advanced in opposition to my inquiry, falls totally short of the object at which it was aimed.

IT was designed to establish a scheme of baptism, which would have the same import, or render baptism of the same import, respecting baptized children, as respecting a baptized adult; for it is made an objection to my inquiry that different things were signified respecting them. p. 33. Yet it is acknowledged; that as to the adult, it seals his title to eternal life, but as to the infant no promises were sealed.

3. THE scheme is, in some respects, unintelligible.

THE condition of the promise, which is supposed to be sealed in baptism, is parental faithfulness. But it is not such a faithfulness as is common to true believers in Christ. It is a faithfulness which cannot be described; it is to be found somewhere between absolute perfection and total negligence. Besides, the promise itself is supposed to contain a security of piety

to children; yet it depends upon such a faithfulness in parents, as is not common to true believers, and as is secured in no covenant whatever; but is as unpromised a favour, as the regeneration, repentance and faith of children.

4. THE plan is calculated to promote and uphold presumption.

THOSE who offer up children upon that plan, must believe in the supposed promise, and engage the requisite faithfulness. But, if they do engage it, they must do it in their own strength; for it is secured by no covenant or promise; for there is no covenant which promises it, even to true believers in Christ. Such as presume to enter into such engagements, must trust to their own resources and sufficiency.

5. THE scheme is such, that such only as have a high conceit of their own eminent piety would probably venture to practise upon it, if it were thoroughly understood.

THE faithfulness which is one condition of the promise, is not common to real believers;—and, no covenant secures it. Therefore such persons as venture to proceed, must do it, on the idea, that they have *more grace* and shall be *more faithful* than believers in common. They must proceed, believing, not only that they are *real saints*, but that they are *eminent saints*. This observation is designed to apply to the scheme, and not, by any means, to the person who has published it.

IT has been shewn already, that the promise which is the basis of the scheme, is not contained in the sacred scriptures. And, that were there a promise, qualified as that is, it could, in reality, amount to nothing more than a bare tender of salvation, made on certain conditions, which conditions are secured in no covenant whatever.—And, if it were such as it is supposed to be, it in no measure shews, that the infants of believers are in covenant.

THE plan of baptism advanced in this and my other

inquiry, I trust, must appear to be plain and consistent—to be attended with no intricacies.

I HAVE now offered to consideration, such observations as were thought to be calculated to settle the important inquiry, relative to the design and import of baptism. Although they have been offered with freedom, yet, it is hoped in the exercise of candor and friendship, to all concerned in the inquiry. Whether the observations which have been made, are to the purpose, the unprejudiced and discerning must determine. I sincerely adopt the benevolent wish; that, “If what is here offered to public view, be not agreeable to the oracles of God, that the mind of no one may be perverted by it. But if this inquiry contain a just representation of God’s new and gracious covenant, it is devoutly to be wished, that the blessing of heaven may attend it.”

AMEN.

ERRATA.

Page.	Line from top.	
17	12	for <i>covenant</i> read <i>common</i> .
	25	for <i>promises</i> read <i>promise</i> .
20	22	for <i>make</i> read <i>mark</i> .
21	4	for <i>imparted</i> read <i>imported</i> .
23	9	for <i>seemed</i> read <i>secured</i> .
24	27	read <i>show</i> .
30	33	dele <i>those</i> .
34	28	for <i>has</i> read <i>had</i> .
46	31	read <i>Tremellius</i> .
72	8	read <i>sentiments</i> .
77	15	read <i>simply</i> .
91	16	read <i>show</i> .

Several errors, of less consequence, in orthography, and some in punctuation, are not inserted in the table, but are trusted to the candor of the reader.



