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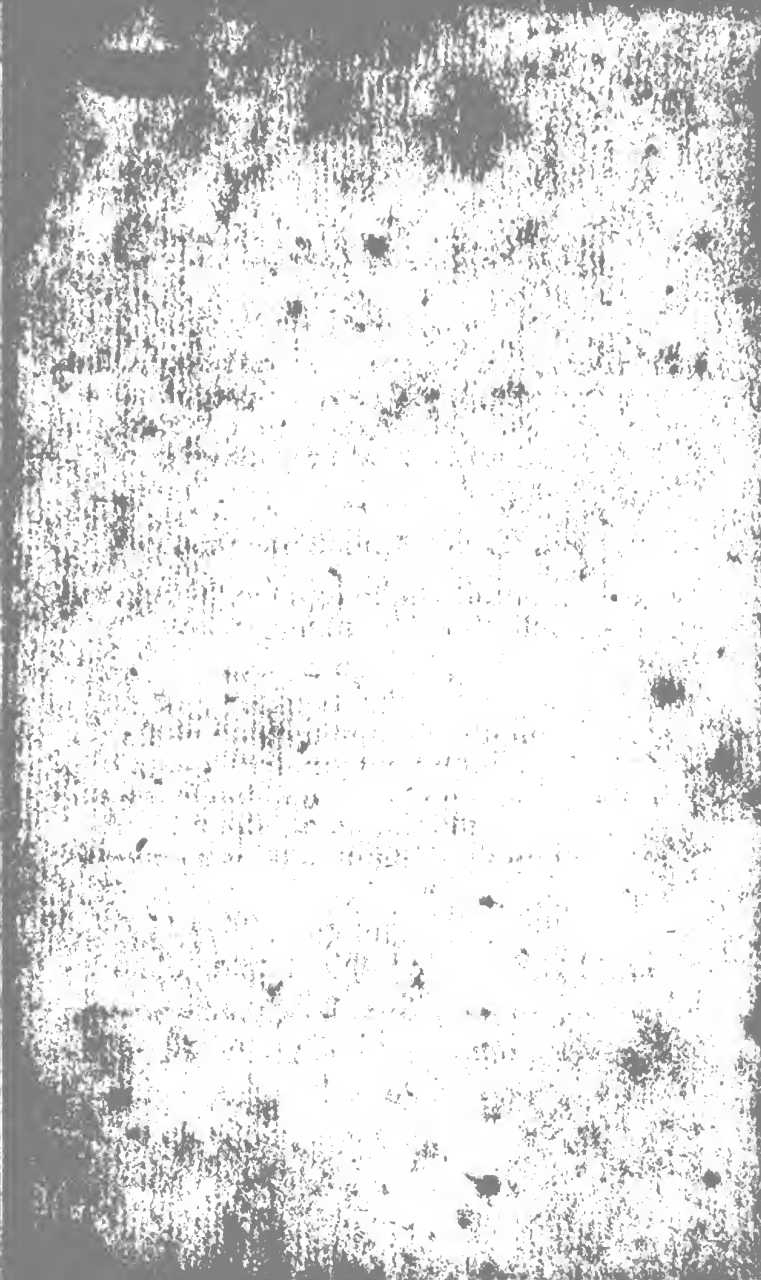
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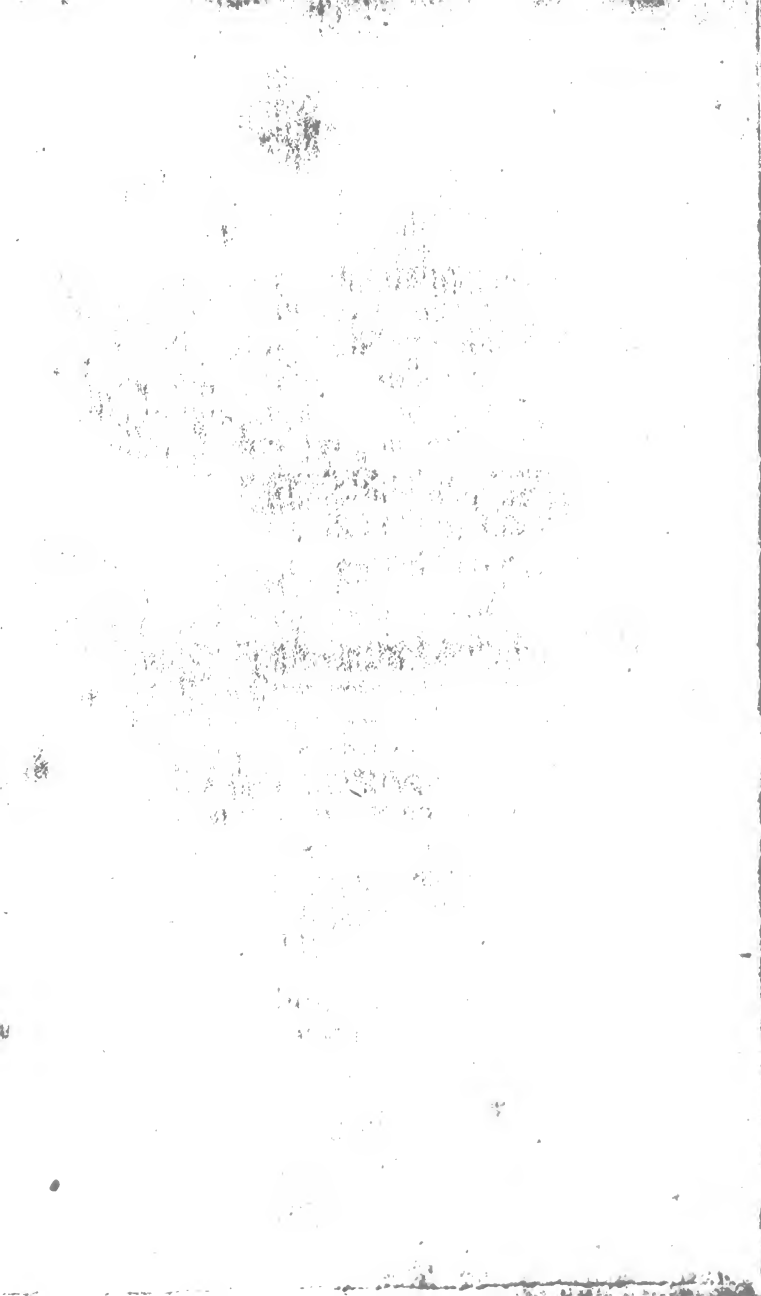
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No 16





S E R M O N S,
O N T H E
M O D E A N D S U B J E C T S
O F
Christian Baptism,

O R
*An attempt to shew that POURING or SPRINKLING
is a SCRIPTURAL MODE ; and the INFANTS of
BELIEVERS are PROPER SUBJECTS of the
BAPTISM instituted by CHRIST :*

W I T H A N
E X A M I N A T I O N O F V A R I O U S O B J E C T I O N S,

Particularly those contained in a Course of Anon-
ymous Letters to *Bishop Hoadly*.

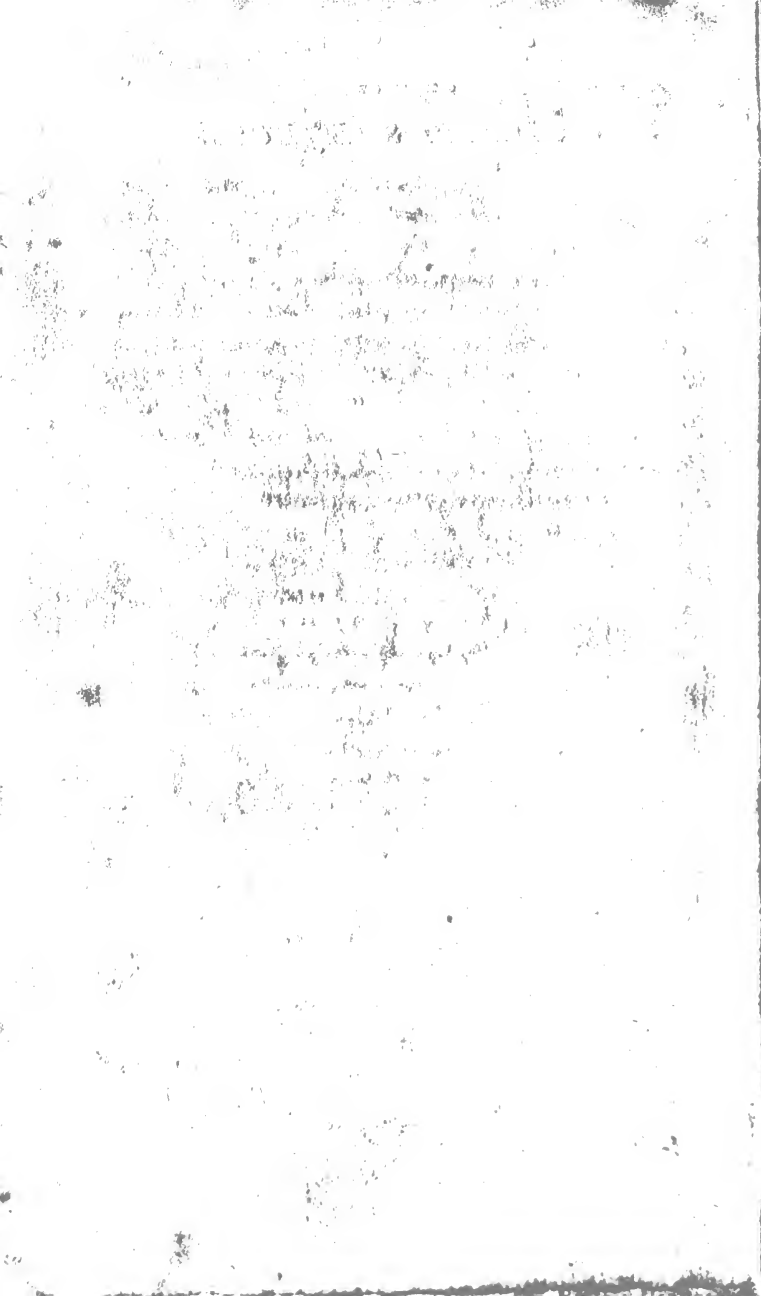
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SERMONS.

EPHESIANS, IV. 5.

ONE BAPTISM.

DISCOURSE—I.

TO persuade the Ephesians to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, the Apostle urges this, among other arguments, that they had received *one Baptism*. If this *one Baptism* was designed to be a bond of peace and unity among christians, how unhappy it is, that it should become an occasion of division and separation? Some will say, 'It is not *one* baptism, but *different* baptisms that cause divisions.' It is true, baptism is administered in different *modes*, and to different *subjects*; but still, I hope, it will appear to be *one* baptism; and if so, then this difference is no just reason for disunion.

You are sensible, my brethren, that I have not been wont to bring controversies into the pulpit. I have purposely avoided the controversy concerning *baptism* in years past, and should have

have done so still, had it not been lately revived among you.—It is not any prejudice against our brethren who differ from us, but a regard to your present circumstances, and to the desire of many among you, that now induces me to enter upon it : and I hope to handle it in such a manner, as, at least, not to offend, if I should not convince. I shall not call in question the validity of the baptism of our brethren : I only aim to vindicate *our own*. And surely when we are charged with having essentially changed a divine institution—when we are represented as being in an unbaptized state—when we are treated as unfit for christian communion, we have a right to plead in our defence.

THERE is a late pamphlet which many of you have read, written by way of Letters to *Bishop Hoadly*, the author of which labours to disprove the validity both of *sprinkling*, and of *infant baptism*, and treats them both with great contempt. I shall pay particular attention to this piece, and take notice of every thing that is material in it.

THE questions before us are two ; whether *sprinkling* is a scriptural mode : and whether *infants* are proper subjects of baptism ? These questions have no necessary connection with each other. But as the validity of our baptism is denied on account of the *mode* in which it was administered, as well as of the *age* at which we received it, I shall distinctly consider both questions ; and shall begin with the former.

PART I.

WE will first enquire, What is the true scriptural mode of Baptism?

THERE are two ways, in which this ordinance is administered; one is *immersion*, or plunging the whole body into water; The other is *affusion*, which is pouring or sprinkling water upon the subject. We do not deny the *validity* of immersion; we only deny the *necessity* of it: But our brethren (at least many of them) deny the validity of *affusion*, and represent it as no baptism, to whomsoever administered. It is therefore of some importance that we enquire, whether there be not such evidence, that *affusion* is a scriptural mode, as may justify our use of it, and satisfy those who have received baptism in this manner.

I SHALL first examine the import of the *Greek* word used for baptism—then consider the uses of baptism and the allusions of scripture to these uses—next enquire, what was the apostolic practice—and lastly take some notice of the usage of the church after the apostolic age.

I. WE will examine the import of the word *baptizo*, which is the *usual*, if not the *only* word by which the writers of the New Testament express the christian ordinance of baptism.

It is agreed, that the word *baptizo*, signifies *to wash* by the application of water: But then, *how* the water is to be applied, whether by plunging the subject *into* water, or by pouring or sprinkling water *upon* the subject, is the question. This will best be determined by considering, how the word is used upon common occasions.

THE author of the Letters to Bishop Hoadly tells us, 'That the writers of the New Testament borrowed their phrases from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the *Septuagint*.' He refers us to this for the sense of the words, which they have used for baptism. He allows that '*baptizo* is the offspring of *bapto*;' and consequently may be taken in the same sense. Zealous as he is for immersion, he is constrained to acknowledge, that '*bapto* is never used in the *Septuagint* for the rite of washing a person's whole body:' But on the contrary, is sometimes used for wetting the body by sprinkling; as in Dan. 4. 33. and chap. 5. 21. where *Nebuchadnezzar's* body is said to be *wet with the dew of heaven*. Now he says, 'We all know, that a person is wet with dew, not by immersion into it, but by its distillation in gentle drops; we are sprinkled with it.' And if *bapto* is never used for plunging the whole body, but sometimes for sprinkling it, probably *baptizo*, 'its offspring,' is generally used in the same sense. Accordingly this author concedes that 'the word *baptizo*, is never but once used, in those very numerous places of the Old Testament, where *bathing* the person is commanded.' The one instance he mentions is in 2 King. 5. 14. where *Naaman* is said to have *dipped* (or baptised) *himself seven times in Jordan*, for the cure of his leprosy. But this one instance, at best, is but a doubtful one; for the law prescribed that the leper should be *sprinkled* seven times for his cleansing. The Prophet says, *wash seven times and thou shalt be clean*. If the Prophet had any respect to the law, as it seems he had, by his enjoining him to *wash seven times*, then

by

by *washing* he meant *sprinkling* ; so that this example will by no means prove, that the word *baptizo*, signifies to *plunge*. We have then *no* instance of *bapto*, and but one (and that a very doubtful instance) of *baptizo*, used in *all* the Old Testament for immersion or bathing the body : But some instances of the former's being used for sprinkling. Thus the matter stands according to the concessions of this writer.

LET us now consult the New-Testament.— There we shall find clear and direct evidence, that the word *baptizo*, signifies to *pour* or *sprinkle*.

It is said, in the beginning of the 7th Chap. of Mark, That *the Pharisees, when they saw some of the disciples eat bread with defiled (that is to say, with unwashen) hands, found fault ; for the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not. And when they come from the market, except they wash, (can ne baptizontai, except they are baptised) they eat not.* What in the former clause, is called *washing the hands*, is here called *being baptised*. The usual manner of washing hands among the *Jews*, we learn from 2 Kings 3. 11. where it is said, *Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah.* Here then you see, persons are said to be *baptised*, when only a *part* of the body is washed by the *pouring on* of water. It is added, *Many other things there are, which they have received to hold, as the washings (baptismous, baptisms) of brazen vessels and tables, or beds, i. e. the seats on which they used to recline at meals, which were so large, that they could be washed only by pouring water on them.*

It is said, Luke 11. 37. *A certain Pharisee asked*

asked Jesus to dine with him. And he went in and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled, that he had not first washed before dinner : Not washed his whole body, but only his hands, according to the Jewish custom mentioned in the before cited passage in Mark. And this is expressed by the same word, which is used for baptizing. He marvelled that he had not been baptised, ebaptisthe, before dinner.

THE *Jews*, by divine appointment, observed divers kinds of purifications, the greater part of which were *sprinklings*. And these are expressly called *baptisms*. The Apostle, in the 9th chap. to Heb. 10th verse, speaking of the *Jewish* ritual, says, *It stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings, (diaphorais baptismois, divers baptisms.)* By these divers *baptisms*, he plainly means the various ceremonies of *sprinkling*; for so he explains them in the following verses. *The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh. Moses took the blood of calves and goats with water—and sprinkled the book and all the people. He sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are, by the law, purged with blood, i. e. with the sprinkling of blood.* Now as the Apostle speaks of divers *baptisms*, and then immediately illustrates them by divers *sprinklings*, and mentions no other purifications, but *sprinklings*, as instances of these divers *baptisms*, it is evident, that if the sacred writer understood *Greek*, *sprinkling* is baptism.

AND since the word, wherever it is used in Scripture for any thing besides the christian ordi-

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nance, plainly signifies *pouring* or *sprinkling*, except in the *single* instance of *Naaman's* dipping himself in *Jordan*, which at most is a very doubtful one, we must naturally suppose, it is used in the same sense, when it is applied to the christian ordinance. This conclusion may have the more weight, because it is deduced from the concessions of a critical writer on the other side of the question.

THERE is another Greek word, *louo*, supposed to be sometimes used for baptism, on which the author of the letters lays more weight: for, 'This, he tells us, is almost the constant word of the *Septuagint*, in those very numerous places where bathing, or washing the *whole* body is commanded.'

THIS word is indeed frequently used for washing the body; sometimes for washing the *whole* body; And if this were the constant and *only* word for baptism in the New Testament, here would be a plausible argument for washing the whole body in baptism.—But it should be observed, that this word is very seldom, if ever used for baptism. The author of the letters has cited about *sixty* passages in the New Testament, as speaking of baptism: Among all these, there are but *four* where this word is used. It is not certain, that baptism is the thing intended in *these*: But if it is, yet no argument can be drawn from them in favour of immersion; but perhaps the contrary. Let us consider them.

ONE is in Heb. 10. 23. *Let us draw near having our body washed,* (*leloumenoi soma*, being washed in the body) *with pure water.* Now a person is washed in his body, though water be poured only on a part of it. Thus when the woman

man poured ointment on Christ's *head*, she is said to have anointed his *body*. And this washing is, in the preceding clause, expressed by *sprinkling*.—*Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water.*

ANOTHER passage is in Titus 3. 5. *He hath saved us (dialoutrou) by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed, or poured on us.* Now if baptism is here intended by the *washing of regeneration*, this text affords a plain argument for *affusion* or *pouring* in baptism: For this washing denotes the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, which is *poured on us*; and therefore, that there may be some resemblance between the sign and the thing signified, baptism should be performed by *pouring*. The phrase of *the pouring of the spirit* is an allusion to *the pouring of water* in baptism.

A THIRD passage is in Eph. 5. 26. *That he might sanctify it (the church) having cleansed it with the washing of water by the word.* Now if baptism be here intended by washing, then the church is said to be sanctified and cleansed by the baptismal washing: But how this washing is performed, whether by sprinkling or plunging, is still the question. The Apostle says, * *sprinkling—sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.* If then we will allow the Apostle to interpret his own phrases, it is *sprinkling* that sanctifies and cleanses the flesh, and consequently is the *washing* intended, when the church is said to be *sanctified and cleansed by the washing of water.* In the 51st Psal. 2d verse, the Psalmist prays, *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity*

* Heb. 9. 13.

quity and cleanse me from sin. He adds ver. 7. *Purge me, (in the Greek it is sprinkle me) and I shall be cleansed.* What in the 2d ver. is called *washing thoroughly*, is in the 7th ver. called *sprinkling*; and the latter is said to *cleanse*, as well as the former. The other passage is in 1 Cor. 6. 11. *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, &c.* This is so nearly parallel to the former, that the same remarks are applicable to both, and therefore nothing further needs to be added.—It appears, I think, that the word which our author chiefly depends on to prove immersion entirely fails him, and finally determines in favour of *affusion*.

THIS now is the result of our enquiry. The word *baptizo*, is *but once*, and perhaps *never* used in all the Old Testament, where bathing the body is commanded. It is often used, in the New Testament, for *sprinkling* or *pouring*. This is the *usual*, if not the *only* word for baptism. It is used, to be sure, in near sixty passages. The word, *louo*, is sometimes used for bathing the body, but never *certainly* used for baptism: There are but four passages, where it is pretended to be so used: And even here it is plainly synonymous with *pouring* or *sprinkling*.

IT is indeed very remarkable, that the writers of the New Testament, when they speak of the christian ordinance of baptism, have generally (if not always) avoided that word, which in the *Septuagint* is used for bathing the body; and chosen a word of a more general signification; and if they have ever used the former, they have joined with it *sprinkling* or *pouring*, as if it were on purpose to teach

teach us, that plunging the whole body is a ceremony not required under the gospel.

II. I APPREHEND we may obtain some satisfaction in the point before us, if we attend to those passages of scripture, in which the uses of baptism are manifestly alluded to.

I. One use of it is to represent the sanctifying influence of the spirit. Christians are said to be *born of water and of the spirit*; and to be saved by the *washing of regeneration and renewing of the holy Ghost*. Peter says to the convicted Jews, *Be baptised and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Ghost.** The influence of the Spirit represented in baptism, is often expressed by *pouring* and *sprinkling*; as in the before cited passages to Titus, and to the Hebrews. *The renewing of the holy Ghost, which he hath poured on us. Having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience.* This *pouring out* of the Spirit is called, being *baptized* with it. That promise, *Ye shall be baptised with the holy Ghost*, is said to have been fulfilled when Christ shed or *poured forth* the Spirit.†

2. BAPTISM represents the forgiveness of sins. Hence these directions. *Be baptised for the remission of sins—Be baptised and wash away thy sins.†* Our sins are washed away in Christ's blood. *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood.‡* And this application of Christ's blood is expressed by *sprinkling*. *Ye are come—to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification*

* Act. 2. 38

† Act. 2. 38. and ch. 22. 16.

‡ Act. 1. 5. and ch. 2. 33.

§ 1 Joh. 1. 7. and Rev. 1. 5.

*sanctification of the spirit unto—sprinkling of the blood of Christ.**

3. BAPTISM with *clean water* may denote the *simplicity* of the Gospel dispensation.

THE writer of the letters says, ‘There does not appear, in all the five books of *Moses*, any rite of sprinkling *meer water*, but it was water mixed with blood, ashes, &c.’ The *Mosaic* institution was of a mixed nature : It consisted both of *moral* and *ceremonial* precepts. And the rites of purification were of a piece with the dispensation itself ; for they were performed by water mixed with other ingredients. But the Gospel dispensation is pure and simple, charged with few external rites, and these plain and easy. Thus. Ezek. 36. 25. God, foretelling the happiness of his people in the Gospel times, says, *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean.* ‘This expression,’ says the author before mentioned, ‘alludes to some *watery purification* in the law of *Moses.*’ But he says, ‘There was no ceremony of unmixed water.’ He thinks, ‘it alludes to the water of separation.’ And yet he says, ‘This was a *composition* of various ingredients.’

THE meaning of the passage then must be this. In the latter times I will give you a *pure* and *spiritual* dispensation, not burdened with such rites and ceremonies as the present. The simple nature and spiritual design of it shall be represented by the great rite of initiation, which shall be the *sprinkling* of *pure water*, and not the application of such mixed compositions as are now in use.

Observe here : *Sprinkling* is said to *cleanse* the
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* Heb. 12. 24. 1 Pct. 1. 2.

person. *I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean, and from all your filthiness will I cleanse you.* So washing Peter's feet only, was washing him. Peter says, *Thou shalt never wash my feet.* Jesus replies, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.* When he moved, that his hands and head might be washed too, Christ answered, *He that is washed, need not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.* †

It has been said, 'A minister may as well wash the hands or feet, as sprinkle the face of a person, in the name of the Trinity, and call it baptism.' I am far from asserting, that the validity of baptism depends upon the part to which the water is applied. There is however an obvious propriety in applying it to the head. *This is the principal part of the body.* It is the part which is usually *uncovered*; and the water doubtless should be applied to the *person*, rather than to his *clothes*. The ceremony of *benediction* was performed by laying the hands on the *head*. *Unction* was performed by *pouring* oil on the *head*, which was called anointing the *body*. The Holy Ghost was communicated by the *imposition* of the Apostles *hands*: And they who had the Spirit communicated to them, were said to be *baptized* with it; which makes it highly probable that baptism, the token of this communication, was performed by putting water on the *heads* of the persons baptized. Accordingly, the Apostle to the *Hebrews* speaks of *the doctrine of Baptisms and laying on of hands.* †

4. THE Apostle, in 1. Cor. 10. speaking of the *Jews* who came out of *Egypt*, says, *They were all baptized*

† John 13. 8, 9, 10.

‡ Chap. 6. 2.

baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. The Apostle here undoubtedly alludes to christian baptism, and therefore we may suppose there was some resemblance between baptism unto *Christ*, and that ancient baptism unto *Moses*.—Now how were they baptized in the cloud and sea? Surely not by being *plunged* all over in water; for *they went over dry shod*; but only by being *sprinkled* with some sprays of the sea, and drops from the cloud. This appears to me the most natural sense of the expression. The author of the letters indeed ridicules such an interpretation, and says, ‘Here is an allusion to the custom of *immersion*, the *Israelites*, being covered by the cloud *over*, and by the water *on each side* of them.’ But I think he has not mended the matter; for though the waters surrounded them, yet (as he would have it understood) not even a spray touched them, nor a drop fell on them; for then they would have been *sprinkled*. It was a *dry* baptism: A baptism without water. *Jonah* might as well have been said, to be baptized in allusion to *immersion*, when he went down into the sides of the ship, and there lay, while a storm hung over him.

5. BAPTISM signifies our obligation to renounce sin and put on the character of Christ.

THE Apostle says, Rom. 6. 4. *We are buried with Christ by baptism into his death.* And Col. 2. 12. *Buried with him in Baptism.* The plain meaning is; by baptism we are bound to die to sin, and walk in newness of life, in conformity to the death and resurrection of Christ. Our brethren imagine, these two passages afford a strong argument for immersion. They tell us, ‘The phrase

phrase of being *buried with Christ in Baptism*, alludes to the manner of baptism, which was a burial in the water; for if there were nothing like a burial, the phrase would be very improper. But as well might they say, 'The mode of baptism must resemble his *crucifixion*; for in the same passage the Apostle says, *We are baptized into his death, planted together in the likeness of his death—our old man is crucified with him*. But I am willing their argument should have its full weight; for if they think *immersion* can be proved from these two passages, where our conformity to Christ is expressed by our being *buried with him in baptism*, they must, if they will be consistent with themselves, allow that *sprinkling* can be more clearly proved from those *numerous* passages, where our justification through Christ's blood is expressed by the *sprinkling of his blood*; and our sanctification is expressed by the *sprinkling of clean water*—by the *heart's being sprinkled*—by the *spirit's being poured on us*, &c. The conclusion then from this argument will be, that *both* modes were admitted by the Apostles—both are valid and agreeable to the institution. Let us no longer contend. This argument bids so fair to reconcile our brethren to our practice, that I could willingly leave them in full possession of it.—I wish it good success.—But if it be attended to, I am afraid, it will appear to have little weight.

How was Christ buried? Not as the dead are usually buried among us, but as rich men were among the *Jews*, in an apartment cut out in the side of a rock. Such tombs were called *sepulchres*

on high ; * because they were made above ground. Lazarus's grave was of this fort ; and he was laid in it in such a position, that, upon his revival, he came forth, while he was bound hand and foot ; but he could not walk, till he was loosed. ' Loose him and let him go.' † Plunging then no more resembles Christ's entombment than sprinkling does. If there were any circumstances in his burial, which baptism can resemble, it must be his embalmment.— It is said, Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, and wound the body of Jesus in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. ‡ And after this, the women prepared spices and ointments and came to anoint his body. The expression of being buried with Christ in baptism, may allude to his body's being anointed with aromatic ointments at the time of his burial ; and this was done by pouring and rubbing them on the body. Accordingly when the woman poured the precious ointment on Christ's head, He says, In that she poured it on my body, she did it to my burial. She is come to anoint my body to the burying. § Observe ; her pouring it only on his head, he calls pouring it on his body ; as on another occasion, a woman's dropping her tears on his feet, he calls washing his feet ; and washing Peter's feet was washing him.— Now in allusion to this manner of anointing, christians are said, to be anointed with the spirit, and to have an unction from the Holy One, which teacheth them of all things. || What is elsewhere called the pouring of the spirit on them ; and being baptized with the spirit ; is here expressed by the anointing

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of

* Isa. 22, 16.

† Joh. 11. 44.

‡ Joh. 19. 40.

§ Mat. 26. 7.

|| 2 Cor. 1. 21. and 1 Joh. 2. 20. 27.

of the Spirit, in allusion to the manner of anointing by *pouring* oil on the head.

III. It is time that we proceed to enquire, in what manner baptism was administered in the times of our Saviour and his Apostles.

OUR brethren, and particularly the gentleman before mentioned, think it very manifest, that *immersion* was the mode practiced in those times, because the persons baptized are, in one or two instances, said to go *into*, and come *out of* the water; because some were baptized *in a river*; and because places *abounding* with water were chosen for baptizing.

BUT let us not be carried away by the meer *sound* of words without examining their sense.

It is said, Mat. 3. 16. *Jesus being baptized came up out of the water.* The Greek phrase (*apo udatos*) properly signifies, *from the water*; and therefore implies no more than that he went *down to it*; which he might properly be said to do in whatever mode he was baptized. And as all natural collections of water are in low places, so the motions *to* and *from* them, must be *descending* and *ascending*, which is sufficient to account for the expression, *he went up from the water.*

As Christ was without sin, his baptism could not be in token of repentance and forgiveness; and, as he came to John after all the people were baptized, it could not be for an example of baptism to them: but it was evidently his public consecration to the ministry, on which he was now entering. He chose this ceremony of consecration, in conformity to the law of God, which had instituted a similar form for the separation of the high priest

priest to his office. And therefore he says, *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*

THE priests under the law, were to enter on the public service of God at the age of *thirty years*; Christ, *when he began to be about thirty years of age*, was baptized. They were consecrated to their office by *washing with water*, and by *anointing with oil*: He was publicly inaugurated into his ministry, by *baptism* and the *unction of the Holy Ghost*. God says to Moses; *Aaron and his sons shalt thou bring to the door of the tabernacle, and shalt wash them with water;—and thou shalt pour the anointing oil on his head. Thou shalt make a laver of brass and put water therein; for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet therein. And Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water, and he poured the anointing oil on Aaron's head, and anointed him to sanctify him.**

The priests were washed, not by the immersion of their bodies into a fountain, but by the application of water to their *hands and feet* from a laver; they were *anointed* by oil poured on their *heads*; thus they were publicly installed in their office. Christ was baptized at Jordan; after his baptism he was anointed with the Holy Ghost, which visibly descended upon him; and then he was declared from heaven to be the Son of God, and the people were commanded to hear him. Alluding to the manner, in which the priests were consecrated, the prophet, in the person of Christ, says, *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel.*† Peter, speaking of the word
which

* Exod. 29. 4, &c. Chap. 30, 19, &c. Lev. 8. 6, 17.

† Mai. 6. 1.

which God sent to Israel by Christ, says, *That word ye know, which began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power.*

Now as in the account given by the Evangelists concerning Christ's baptism there is nothing which necessarily imports an immersion; as his baptism was in compliance with the instituted usage of consecrating the ancient priests, and as there is no mention of their *total* immersion, but express mention of their *partial* washing; we may, with great probability, conclude, that his baptism was by the application of water to a *part* of his body.*

BUT though he had been washed by immersion, this would no otherwise be an argument for immersion now, than as an instance of the use of the word *baptize*, because his baptism was a different thing from that which he afterwards instituted.— And as it appears highly probable, that his baptism was a *partial* washing, it was an example in favor of our opinion, that *baptism* does not signify a *total immersion*; but may properly be performed by pouring or sprinkling water on a part of the body.

AGAIN, Act. 8. 38. *They (Philip and the Eunuch) went down both into the water, and he baptized him, and they came up out of the water.*— This passage is thought to favor immersion: But it no more proves that the *Eunuch* was *covered* with water, than that *Philip* was; for one is said to go *into* the water, as much as the other. They might be

* The laver in which the priests were washed was a portable vessel of brass, standing on a single foot, and not of sufficient capacity for the immersion of a human body.

be said to go *into* the water, if they only stepped into the edge of it. The words do not necessarily imply even so much as that ; for the particles rendered *into* and *out of*, very often signify no more than *to* and *from* ; as where Christ bids *Peter*, go to the sea and cast his hook—and where the *Queen* of the South is said to come from the utmost parts of the earth. Now no man supposes, that *Peter* plunged himself into the sea ; or that the *Queen* of the South crept out from under ground ; and yet the Greek particles here rendered *to* and *from* are the same, which in the case of the *Eunuch* are rendered *into* and *out of*. All therefore that we can conclude from this passage is, that they went down from the chariot to the water, there *Philip* baptized him, and then they returned : But in what manner he baptized him, we can no more learn from this passage, than from any other in the bible. But if the accounts of ancient and modern writers are true, he could baptize him only by pouring or sprinkling water on him ; for they say, that in the place here mentioned, nothing more than a small spring can be found.

It is said, Mark 1. 5. They were baptized of *John* in the river of *Jordan*. Hence some have concluded that they were plunged in the river. But this is a forced conclusion. Christ says to the blind man, whose eyes he had anointed with clay, Go wash in the pool of *Siloam*.* Here the phrase of washing in the pool, intends no more than washing his eyes with the water of the pool. And with equal propriety *John's* hearers may be said to be baptized

baptized in *Jordan*, if only *some* of the water of the river was poured on their faces.

WE read John 3, 23, that *John* baptized in *Enon* because there was much water there. It is asked, 'Why should he chuse a place abounding with water to baptize in, if he did not baptize by immersion?' I answer, These words (*polla udata*) rendered *much water*, properly signify *many waters*, and may be understood of various rivulets or springs, which, travellers say, are the only waters there to be found, and not any large collections convenient for immersion. If *John* baptized only by *affusion*, a considerable quantity of water would be necessary to baptize such multitudes, as went out to him from *Jerusalem*, and all *Judea*, and all the region round about *Jordan*.—Yea, though ever so few of them had been baptized, there was good reason why he should chuse a place to preach in, that was well supplied with water; for the multitudes that attended on his preaching, in the wilderness, at a distance from their homes, would need much water for their refreshment. It is by no means supposeable, that *such numbers* could, here in the desert, be provided with change of apparel proper for immersion; and surely, in such a *numerous* and *mixed* assembly, they were not baptized *naked*. The circumstances of the case therefore lead us to suppose, they were baptized by *affusion*.

WE read, Act. 2. Of *three thousand* baptized, in *only part of a day*, at the feast of pentecost. It cannot rationally be thought, that these were plunged. There does not seem to have been time
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for it ; nor is it likely they had change of raiment, as they came to the feast without any expectation of such an occasion ; nor is it probable, they could be accommodated there with any convenient place for immersion. If there were baths sufficient for the purpose in the temple, yet it is very incredible, that the priests and officers of the temple should be willing to accommodate the Apostles with them, in order to initiate these converts into a religion, which they were endeavoring by all means to suppress.

WHEN we read of whole families baptized in their houses, particularly of the *Sailor* and his family baptized at home, and at midnight too, in the same hour in which he believed, we cannot think, that a sufficiency of water, and other conveniences for a decent immersion, could be procured on so sudden an occasion.

WHEN *Cornelius* and his friends received the gospel, *Peter* asks, not whether any man could hinder them from going to a fountain or river ; but *whether any man could forbid water*, i. e. hinder water from being provided, *that they should not be baptized ?**

PAUL seems to have been baptized in the house of *Judas*. There *Ananias* found him, delivered his message to him, and laid his hands on him ; *And he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized.†*

It is worthy to be remarked, that though we read of baptisms in various places, yet we have no account of any person's going from the place where he was, in order to be baptized in a fountain or river. They who were baptized in streams and
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* Act. 10. 47.

† Act. 9. 18.

natural collections of water, are such as were found abroad, either in the wilderness, or on the road; when they first discovered their desire to be baptized.

IV. It now remains, that we consider, what was the usage of the primitive Church, upon which our brethren lay great weight in this controversy.

THE author of the letters says, ‘The whole christian church, for 1300 years successively from the time of the Apostles, understood by baptism, *immersion*, and so practised; *Sprinkling being only permitted on extraordinary occasions.*’ This argument he often repeats, and depends much upon, as do most of the advocates for immersion: for they reckon, that the early practice of the Church in this matter may shew, what was the practice of the Apostles, because it is not likely, the apostolic practice would be early and generally disused.

THE truth is, The manner of baptizing among the ancients was looked upon circumstantial, and no way essential to the validity of the ordinance. In the times near the Apostles, immersion was much practiced, but never asserted to be necessary: Far from this; sprinkling was expressly allowed, and frequently used, especially in cases of infirmity, haste, or want of water or other conveniences. This the Author himself concedes, that from the Apostles times for 1300 years, ‘sprinkling was permitted on extraordinary occasions.’ *Cyprian* (who wrote within about 150 years of the Apostles) speaking of sprinkling, says, ‘in the sacrament of salvation (i. e. baptism) when
necessity

necessity compels, the *shortest* ways of transacting divine matters, do, by God's grace, confer the whole benefit.' And it may not be impertinent to observe, that the ancients, who practiced immersion, did usually, after the body had been plunged, apply water to the face. So far therefore as the practice of the ancients is of weight, it proves all that we contend for. We do not say, immersion is unlawful, or a meer nullity : We say, it is not necessary, but affusion is sufficient and agreeable to the divine word. And so said the ancient church.

I HOPE what has been offered is sufficient to justify the mode of baptism admitted in our churches, and to satisfy all, who have received baptism in this mode, that they have no need to seek immersion. The question concerning the mode is really of small importance in itself, and nothing but the controversy about it has made it otherwise. If our baptism is treated as a nullity, it is of importance to satisfy our minds : And if any have been thrown into doubts, I hope, the consideration of what has been said, will give them satisfaction.





P A R T II.

DISCOURSE II.

I COME now to the second part of my design, which is to vindicate the right of Infants to baptism.

THE method in which I shall proceed is as follows. I shall first consider the usual objections against infant-baptism.—Next produce our arguments in vindication of it.—Then briefly touch upon the reasonableness and usefulness of it.—After which I shall give a short view of the practice of the church soon after the Apostles.—And then by way of conclusion shall shew the absurdity of separations in churches on account of differences respecting baptism. The unwarrantableness of rebaptization, &c.

I. I WILL distinctly consider all the material objections of our brethren against infant baptism, as I collect them from their writers, and particularly from the author of the letters before mentioned.

I. IT is said, 'Christ has fully and plainly declared his mind about baptism; and because he has not *commanded* the baptism of infants, he has virtually *forbidden* it.'

Now though it should be allowed, that there is no *express* command, yet if we can find a *virtual, consequential*

consequential command for it, that, I trust, will be a sufficient warrant : Otherwise what warrant shall we have to admit females to the Lord's supper ? To observe the first day of the week as holy ? To maintain public worship ? *These* and many other things, are no where enjoined, *in so many words*, but yet can clearly be shewn to be agreeable to the will of God. What command have our brethren to justify their practice ? Where is the passage, which tells us, that baptism must be confined to the adult ; and infants, though formerly admitted to the seal of the covenant, must now be admitted no more ? They can find nothing of this sort. But, I trust, it will appear, that there is what may properly be called a command for *our* practice. If that passage in *Isaiah*, *Lo, I have set thee for a light to the Gentiles*; was a *command* to the Apostles, to go and preach to the Gentiles, as it is said to be ;* then the direction given to *Abraham* our Father, to affix the token of the covenant to his *infant-seed*; the commission given to the Apostles to disciple *all nations* baptizing them ; and the exhortation of *Peter*, *be baptized—for the promise is to you and your children*, are commands to admit infants to baptism ; as we shall endeavour to shew hereafter.

2. It is objected, 'that in all the history of the New Testament there is no *example* of infant-baptism ; but the baptisms we have an account of, 'are the baptisms of professed believers.'

But if there is no express mention of infant-baptism, yet we cannot hence conclude, it was never practised ; any more than we can conclude, that
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some whole churches were formed without any baptism at all, because it is no where said, they were baptized. If a plain direct example be insisted upon, our brethren must certainly give up their notion of baptism; for *they* can find no example in their favor, whatever *we* can; as will be evident, if we only consider what is the question between us. It is not, whether adult profelytes should be baptized? But whether the infants of professed believers should be baptized? There are, it is true, instances enough of the baptism of adults, who had been converted from *Judaism* or *Paganism*: But *these* are nothing to the point; for we allow baptism to all adult believers, who have not been baptized in infancy. And the Apostles' baptizing *such* is no argument, that *they* did not baptize *infants*, any more than our missionaries' baptizing adults among the natives, is an argument, that *they* do not baptize infants. The question is merely this; are the infants of baptized believers to be admitted to baptism? Or to be rejected? If you say, they must be rejected and suffered to grow up before they are baptized; I ask, Where is your example? Did the Apostles refuse to baptize *such*? Or among the adults whom they baptized, do you find any that were born of christian parents? The history of the Acts contains a period of above thirty years, and the New Testament, a much longer period. There was time enough for two or three generations of infants to grow up to adult age. We have all along accounts of baptism. But it is remarkable, that in all this time, there is no intimation, that any one of the children of the early believers was baptized after he grew up; or that any one of those adults

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whom the Apostles baptized, was born of believing parents. It is plain then, there is not one example, which in the least, favors the opinion of our brethren, which is this, *That the children of believers must be left to grow up before they are baptized.* They ask, 'Is it not a little strange, that we no where find children mentioned, if it were the Apostles' custom to baptize them with their parents?' And I ask; is it not very strange, that we no where find the children of believers baptized after they grew up, if it was the Apostles' custom to leave them unbaptized till they grow up? There is no example of this kind. But, we think, we have examples, and just such examples in favor of our practice, as we should have, upon supposition, the Apostles did baptize children with their parents.

Let us suppose infants were baptized: And what account should we have of it? Would the history tell us, such an infant by name of such an age, and such an one of such an age, was baptized? No: This minuteness could not be expected concerning infants, who are seldom known, by their names or ages, out of the families, to which they belong. All we could expect to be told is this; such a man was baptized and his family—such a woman and her household. And this we are told; *Stephanas's* household, *Lydia* and her household, the *Sailor* and all his were baptized; which are plain examples of families baptized upon the faith of their respective heads; as I shall shew more fully hereafter.

3. It is argued, 'that faith and repentance are the conditions of baptism; infants are not capable of these, and therefore not capable of baptism.'

But as well might our brethren say, 'Faith and repentance are conditions of salvation, and therefore infants, being incapable of these cannot be saved.' It is expressly said, *He that believeth not shall be damned.* It is no where said, *He that believeth not, or repenteth not, shall not be baptized.* Faith and repentance are required on several particular occasions, when baptism was to be administered to adult persons; but we find no general rule given to exclude from baptism such as are incapable of faith and repentance. Our brethren will not exclude infants from salvation, upon the authority of those texts, which make faith the condition of it; and surely, if they will be consistent with themselves, they cannot exclude them from baptism, upon the authority of those texts, which make faith the condition of *that*; especially since these texts plainly respect adult profelytes. That *such* must profess their faith we allow. But the apostolic practice shews, that upon their profession, not only *they*, but their *households* also should be baptized; as under the ancient dispensation, when a *Gentile* became a profelyte, not only he himself, but all his male children were circumcised.

The instances in which faith, or repentance is enjoined previously to baptism, are only when adult persons enquired what was necessary for *themselves*. The question was not concerning the qualification for baptism in *general*; but what was requisite in *their own case*. 'What shall we do?'—'What hinders *ME* to be baptized?' The Apostles answer the question, as it respected those who proposed it. *Repent ye and be baptized—If thou believest, thou mayst be baptized.* These directions only prove,
that

that a profession of faith and repentance is necessary to the baptism of adults, which none deny ; but, in no degree affect the right of infants.

Faith was as much required under the Old Testament in order to circumcision, as it is under the new in order to baptism ; but still infants were circumcised. The gentile proselyte was not admitted to this rite, till he professed his faith in the God of Israel ; neither was the adult Jew. During the forty years that circumcision was intermitted in the wilderness, a new generation came on the stage. These were circumcised soon after they passed over Jordan.* But previously to this, they had solemnly avouched the Lord to be their God. Now because faith was a pre-requisite to the circumcision of adults, shall we conclude that no infants were circumcised ? This would be contrary to known fact. But this conclusion would be as just as the other, which determines against the baptism of infants, because a profession of faith was required in proselytes. The truth is, all arguments drawn from special and particular cases, are impertinent to an enquiry concerning a general rule of practice.

The author of the letters lays particular weight upon that passage, 1. Pet. 3. 21. *The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.* ‘ Here,’ he says, ‘ such a condition of baptism is required, as infants are not capable of. The filth of their flesh may be put away : But how shall they answer the good conscience ?’ But it should be observed, that the answer

* Josh. 5.

answer of a good conscience is made the condition of *salvation*: Not of *baptism*. He might therefore rather have said, such a condition of *salvation* is required as infants are not capable of. *This* is a condition of *salvation* and *baptism* too in adults, but of neither in infants, who are not yet moral agents. The Apostle says, *Circumcision is that of the heart*; but surely he did not mean, that *Jews* were incapable of the fleshy *circumcision*, until they were capable of professing the *circumcision of the heart*. *Baptism*, which is externally *the putting away the filth of the flesh*, signifies our obligation to *answer a good conscience toward God*. This obligation immediately takes place with respect to all, who are moral agents, and with respect to infants, when they become such. Here is then no argument *against* the *baptism of infants*.

Let us see if there be not a plain argument for it. The Apostle is here speaking of the preservation of *Noah* and his family in the flood, by means of the ark. The Apostle to the *Hebrews* says, *By faith, Noah, prepared an ark to the saving of his house*. It was by *Noah's* faith, that his family was brought into the ark, and preserved in the flood. *The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth now save us*. Where is the likeness? Plainly here. As *Noah* by faith prepared an ark, by which his house was saved; so the faith of the *christian* parent brings his family within the privileges of the covenant. Salvation came to *Zaccheus's* house, in consequence of his believing. *They* enjoyed some special privileges on account of *his* faith.

4. We read, Act. 8. 5. that *when the Samaritans believed Philip, preaching the things concerning*
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the kingdom of God, they were baptized both men and women. Upon this our author observes, ‘The history is so particular as to mention both *men* and *women*, but there stops.—Had the sacred historian been a little more explicit and said, *men, women and children*, if the fact were really so; it would have prevented much doubt and controversy.’

In answer to this, it is sufficient to say; as the seal of the covenant under former dispensations had been affixed *only* to males, so there was good reason, why the historian should be so particular, as to mention both *men* and *women*, i. e. males and females, (for these terms are in scripture applied to persons of all ages) that it might appear, that the covenant-seal was, for the future, to be affixed to persons of both *sexes*. But as the seal had *always* been applied to *children*, there was no occasion for his being so explicit, as to say, *men, women and children*, if the fact were really so; for children’s right to the covenant-token had not then been made a question; and they who knew the immemorial and universal usage of admitting *Jewish* infants by circumcision, and the infants of *Gentile* profelytes by baptism, did not need to be instructed, that infants were entitled to baptism under the christian dispensation. They must naturally suppose it, unless expressly told the contrary.

5. It is urged by some, ‘that Jesus Christ, who came to be our example, was baptized at adult age, and that we ought to imitate him herein.’

But his example is no more an argument against *infant* baptism, than against all baptism under the age of thirty years; for this was his age, when he was baptized, though he was certainly capable of understanding

understanding the nature of baptism before he was *twelve*. Do our brethren think, that all are bound, in imitation of Christ, to live, unbaptized, twenty years after they arrive to the age of understanding?

The objection before us is founded in the supposition, that the baptism which Christ received, was the same, in its nature and design, with that which he himself afterwards appointed. If it was a different thing, no argument can be drawn from it in the present question. If it was the same, then it at once removes the principal objection against the baptism of infants, taken from their incapacity for faith and repentance. For Jesus was as incapable of faith in a mediator and repentance of sin, as infants are; though from a different cause.

But, as I have before shewn, Christ's baptism was his public inauguration into his ministry, and therefore is impertinently adduced to disprove the baptism of infants. When we are asked, why Christ was not baptized in his infancy, it is sufficient to answer, because he did not take on him his public ministry in his infancy. To argue, that because Christ was publicly consecrated to his priesthood at the age of thirty years, therefore none should be given to God by baptism in their childhood, is an inconclusive way of reasoning.

Let it, however be observed, that, though he was not *baptized* in infancy, yet he was *dedicated* to God, by such rites as were then in use. He was *circumcised* on the eighth day; and on the fortieth day, he was brought by his parents into the temple, and there presented to God, according to the law, which required, that every first-born male
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should be holy to the Lord. This example shews, that parents ought publicly to dedicate their children to God in his appointed way; and, since baptism is now the appointed ceremony of dedication, it shews, that they should present their children to him in baptism.*

6. The

• If it could be proved, which certainly it never can, that John baptized only adults, yet no argument could hence be deduced against the right of infants to baptism under the gospel dispensation; for the baptism which John administered, was not properly christian baptism.

Though before Christ's time, baptism was in use among the Jews, yet it was not made the only initiating seal of the covenant, until after his resurrection.

John was sent to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and thus to prepare men for that new dispensation of God's kingdom, which was not yet come, but was then *at hand*.—Christ instituted his baptism after this dispensation was come. John's baptism materially differed from this. The baptism, which Christ instituted was, *in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. John did not baptize in the name of the *Holy Ghost*; for some who had received his baptism, confessed that *they had not so much as heard, whether there were any Holy Ghost*. He did not baptize in the name of *the Son*, or in the faith, that *Jesus was the Christ*; but *with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people, that they should believe on him who should come after him; that is, on Jesus Christ*. Nor did he baptize into *Christ's death*, for this event had not then taken place. Had John taught that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, and baptized the people in his name, and into this faith, they would not have *mused in their hearts, whether John were the Christ*; nor have asked him, *Why baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ?* Nor would Jesus have cautioned his disciples, *to tell no man, that he was the Christ, till after his resurrection*. John's baptism was designed to prepare men for the faith in Christ, when he should be made manifest to Israel.

But what is decisive in the case is, that some who had received John's baptism, were *afterwards* baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Among the many thousands *from all Judea and Jerusalem*, to whom Peter preached on the day of pentecost, it cannot be doubted, that there were multitudes, who had been baptized by John; for *there went out to him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him*. And yet Peter says to them, without distinction, *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ*.

6. The incapacity of children for the ends of baptism or for any benefit from it, is often urged as an argument against their being baptized.

But really the question is, Whether there be any divine warrant for their baptism? If there is, it becomes us to practise accordingly, and not to arraign the wisdom of God. That there are some rational ends to be answered by infant baptism, and that it is a gracious and beneficial institution, I trust, will appear under another head, where this objection will receive a full answer. In the mean time it may suffice to observe, that infants are now as capable of the ends of baptism, as they were anciently of the ends of circumcision. They may be brought into covenant with God—may have privileges made over to them—may receive the seal and token of privileges—may be laid under

An instance still more plain we have in the beginning of the 19th Ch. of Acts. Paul finding at Ephesus twelve disciples, said to them, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* And they said to him, *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.*—And he said to them, *Unto what then were ye baptized?* And they said, *Unto John's baptism.* Then said Paul, *John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him, who should come after him, that is, on Jesus Christ.* *When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* *And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, &c.*

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. The meaning cannot be, that when the people heard John, they were by him baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; because then it will follow, that Paul laid his hands on all the people whom John baptized; for they, who are here said to be baptized, are evidently the persons on whom Paul laid his hands. But the sense must be, that when these twelve disciples who had been baptized by John, now heard Paul, they were baptized by him. It follows then that John's baptism, being neither in the name of Christ nor of the Holy Ghost, was different from that which Christ instituted; and no arguments can be drawn from the former, to determine the mode, or subjects of the latter; nor can the repetition of christian baptism be justified from this example of Paul.

under obligations to obey the gospel, as the *Jewish* infants by circumcision became debtors to obey the law—and may become subjects of that justification through Christ's blood, that renovation of the Spirit, and title to eternal life, which are signified and represented in baptism.

I have now given you a view of all the material arguments, which are brought to disprove infant baptism. And what has been said in answer to them is, I think, sufficient to shew, that they have no real weight. The way is now prepared to bring forward our arguments in vindication of this point, which was the second thing proposed.

II. We will here take a distinct view of the principal arguments in defence of the right of believer's infants to baptism, and endeavour to establish them against the cavils of our opponents, and particularly the author of the letters before mentioned.

I. Our first argument shall be taken from the *Abrahamic* covenant together with the Apostle's explanation of it.

In the 17th chap. of Gen. we find, that God made a covenant with *Abraham* and his seed, into which his infants were expressly taken, together with himself, by the same rite and token. This covenant comprehended not only his natural seed, but the stranger who was not of his seed. It was a *spiritual* covenant. The capital promise of it was *I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee.*—This was the same covenant, which now subsists, and which we are now under in this gospel-age, as the Apostle expressly teaches us, in the 4th chap. to Rom. and 3d chap. to Gal. where he argues from the covenant with *Abraham*, to shew the nature

ture and extent of the gospel-covenant. He testifies, that all believers under the gospel, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, are the spiritual seed of *Abraham*, and consequently *heirs of the promise* made to him—that the covenant made with *Abraham* was *confirmed of God in Christ*—that the law which was given afterwards did not disannul the covenant, or vacate the promise—that the gospel was preached to *Abraham*, in that promise of the covenant with him, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*—that the blessing of *Abraham* is come upon the *Gentiles* through Christ—that the promise made to *Abraham* is sure to all the seed, not only to that which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of *Abraham*, who is the father of us all, as it is written, *I have made thee a father of many nations*—that they who are of faith are the children of *Abraham*, and to *Abraham* and his seed were the promises made—and much more to the same purpose.

Now if we are the seed of *Abraham*, for whom the covenant with him was established, and are still under the self-same covenant, then the same privileges that were herein granted to him, belong to us. One grant of that covenant was, that infants should be received with their parents by the same sign and seal; and therefore we, as the seed of *Abraham*, may claim this privilege for our infants. Yea, God not only allowed, but *commanded*, that the appointed token of the covenant should be affixed to every male child who was not under eight days old. Here then is a plain command given to *Abraham* our father, and consequently to us his children, to apply the token of this very covenant, which we are now under, to our infant-seed. The
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only question is, whether there be now any token of the covenant? Had circumcision been continued, none could doubt but infants were still subjects of it by virtue of the command given to *Abraham*, unless they would expunge the 4th chap. to Rom. and 3d to Gal. Circumcision has ceased. But has Christ appointed any token of the gospel covenant? Baptism is certainly such. *This* then is to be applied to the same subjects as *that* was. If there was an express command to affix the covenant seal to infants in *Abraham's* time, and the covenant still remains; then the covenant-seal, whatever it is, ought to be affixed to infants now, unless the command has been repealed. The change of the *seal* makes no change of the *subject*. There must be a command to warrant our rejecting the *old subject*, as well as to justify our dropping the *old seal*. If our brethren ask, Why we have discontinued circumcision, and now make use of baptism? We answer, Christ has so commanded. Let them produce as good authority for affixing this *new seal* of the same covenant to believers *only*, and *not* to their children, and we will comply with them. We demand of them to shew us some plain, positive order of Christ to deny the seal of the covenant to those subjects, to whom it was first ordered to be applied. Until such order appears, we boldly affirm, that the old command remains, and to act in disobedience to it is presumption.

To evade the force of this argument, our brethren assert, that 'the christian church is an institution entirely new; a structure erected on a new foundation, distinct from, and unconnected with the foundation of the patriarchal and jewish church;'

church;’ for they easily see, that if the christian church is the ancient church, continued under the same covenant which was made in ancient times, then the admission of children with their parents into this church, will stand secure on the foot of the former institution. It may not therefore be improper to pursue our present argument a little farther.

The foundation of the ancient church is, *the discovery of God’s mercy to fallen men through a redeemer.* This discovery was first made to Adam in the sentence on the tempter; and afterward more fully to Abraham in the promise already mentioned. *This* God expressly calls his *everlasting covenant.* *This* is always considered by Moses and the prophets, as the ground on which the faith and hope of the Jewish church rested. Moses says, * ‘Ye stand all of you before the Lord, your wives and little ones, that thou shouldst enter into covenant with him, that he may be a God to thee, as he hath sworn to Abraham.’ The prophet Jeremiah, † foretelling the gospel dispensation, describes it by an allusion to the covenant with Abraham, which he distinguishes from the covenant of peculiarity made with the Jews at Sinai, when they came out of Egypt. The apostle to the Hebrews † applies the prophet’s description to the gospel-state. The old covenant, which, he says, was decayed and ready to vanish, is not the covenant with Abraham; for *this* he calls the covenant which God would make in the latter days, or would explicitly renew in the gospel time, promising, *I will be their God:* but

* Deut. 29.

† Chap. 31. 32.

‡ Chap. 8.

the old covenant, which was to vanish away, no more to be renewed, is the *ceremonial* covenant, or that which God made with the Jews, *when he brought them out of Egypt.*

When the prophets foretel the call of the gentiles, they speak of them as joining themselves to the church then subsisting. In the 49th chap. of Isaiah, God comforts Sion, the Jewish church, in her despondency, with a promise that he will never forsake her, but her walls shall be continually before him. ‘Lift up thine eyes round about,’ says her God, ‘and behold! All these gather themselves together, and come unto THEE. The children, which thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other, shall say, The place is too strait for me.—Then shalt thou say, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my other children? Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles—and they shall bring thy sons, in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.’—The children of these Gentile profelytes are called the sons and daughters of the church. They are brought in the arms of their parents to the church ‘to be nursed at her side.’—No words can more plainly describe the admission of Gentile profelytes into the very church which was then in being, and the solemn dedication of their children, as members of the church with them. Similar representations are frequent in the prophetic writings.

The words of our Saviour, in 10th chap. of John, are full to our purpose. ‘Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring.’ I must bring them into this fold, the Jewish
d. church.

church; for what other fold was there then existing? 'And they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.'

The apostle Peter,* exhorting the Jews to repentance, points them to the Saviour, whom the prophets foretold, and says, 'Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, which God made with our fathers, saying, *In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*: unto you first God hath raised up his son, and sent him to bless you.'

Paul, in the epistle to the Ephesians, treats explicitly on this subject. He says, 'Ye were once afar off, without Christ, aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise. But now in Christ ye are made nigh. Christ is our peace, who hath made *both one*; i. e. hath united both Jews and Gentiles. Now therefore ye are 'no more strangers and foreigners, but *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*; and are built on the foundation of the *apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.' The prophets and apostles laid the same foundation. The prophets foretold a Saviour to come; the apostles preached this Saviour already come. The predictions of the former, and the doctrines of the latter are the same foundation, the corner-stone of which is Christ himself. The apostle adds, 'Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, that the gentiles should be *fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel*.'

The Jews, who were baptized on the day of pentecost, believed that Jesus was Lord and Christ,

on evidence derived from the prophets ; and were admitted to baptism on the foot of the *promise* made to their *fathers*. The same promise, which was the foundation of the ancient church, and of which circumcision was the seal, is alledged by the apostle, as a reason for the baptism of these Christian Jews and their children, and as many as God should call from among the gentiles. The christian church here stands on the old foundation ; and to this church were added those who afterwards were baptized.

In the 11th chap. to the Romans the apostle expressly declares, that the gentile believers are grafted into *the same alive-tree* from which *some* of the Jews, the natural branches, were broken off by unbelief. 'If some of the branches, were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wert grafted in among them,' the branches that remained, 'and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches ; for thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. They were broken off by unbelief, and thou standest by faith.' It is the same root, which beareth the natural, and the ingrafted branches. *Some* of the natural branches were broken off—not all.—The believing Jews continued still in the same old stock, in which they had before stood, and in which believing gentiles were ingrafted. The gentiles were not inserted into a *new* stock, a *tree lately grown up* ; nor were believing Jews lopt off from the old tree to be inserted with gentiles into a new one : but the former *remained* in the old stock, and the latter were grafted in *among them*, to partake *with them* of the root and fatness of the *same olive*, which had formerly nourish them. And it is observable, that

that these Jews, who immediately and readily submitted to the gospel, on its being proposed to them, seem not generally, if in any instance, to have received christian baptism. Heathens and Samaritans, who were not of the church of God, and those Jews, who by obstinate unbelief, and open opposition to the gospel, had broken themselves off from the church, were on their professed repentance, baptized. The other *continued* in God's covenant and church. This thought we shall have occasion to resume hereafter. When the unbelieving Jews shall, in the latter days, turn to the Lord, they shall be grafted again—into what?—another tree? no; into THEIR OWN olive-tree; for the covenant, which God made with their fathers, is *the same*, which he will make with *them* in the *latter* days, when he shall take away their sins.

We have now an obvious answer to a question, which our brethren often put to us. 'If the children of believers are subjects of the covenant-seal under the gospel, as they were under former dispensations, why have we not some direct, positive institution, which might have prevented all controversy?'

The fact is, the gospel found the children of God's people already in covenant by virtue of the ancient institution: and a new institution of that, which had been plainly instituted before, and was not then so much as questioned, would have been superfluous: not to say, absurd. The gospel has made it as plain as language can make any thing, that the ancient covenant with Abraham is still continued: and if children were, by divine command, to receive the seal of the covenant formerly, they are

to receive it still, unless the command is somewhere in the gospel expressly revoked. We need no new institution to warrant our applying the seal to them; but we evidently need a new institution to justify our excluding them from it.

Infant baptism stands on the same ground as the christian sabbath. If it be asked, why the gospel has not, in so many words, instituted a weekly sabbath, the answer is, it found a weekly sabbath already instituted; and a formal institution of that, which had been instituted before, was wholly unnecessary. The apostles took the sabbath as they found it, only observing a different day, after Christ's resurrection, in memory of that glorious event. So they continued the ancient usage of applying the seal of God's covenant to children, as well as parents; only they changed the external form of the seal, substituting baptism for circumcision. The ancient institution unrevoked, if we had nothing more, would be sufficient to justify the application of the seal to infants. But we have still farther warrant.

Let us view the argument in another light.

2. Circumcision was of old, by divine command, applied to infants: And if baptism stands now in the place of circumcision, then this is also to be applied to the same subjects. The consequence is plain and undeniable. The only question is, Whether baptism does now stand in the place of circumcision? This is the point to be proved.

That circumcision was the seal of the covenant with *Abraham*, and was, by divine appointment, administered to infants, is well known—that the *Abrahamic* covenant still subsists, and is the same as
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the *Gospel* covenant, the Apostle plainly teaches—that baptism is now the appointed token of the gospel covenant, none will deny: The consequence is obvious; baptism now stands in the place of circumcision, for it is the initiating seal of that very covenant, of which circumcision was the seal formerly.

Again. The Apostle says, Rom. 4. 11. *Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith.* It is plain from this passage, that circumcision was a sign of spiritual blessings, the blessings of the covenant of grace: And not (as some absurdly pretend) merely a sign of worldly privileges, such as a right to the land of *Canaan*, a numerous issue, &c. There were, it is true, temporal blessings promised to *Abraham* and his seed. But to argue from hence, that the covenant with him was a meer temporal covenant, and that circumcision was only a seal of it *as such*, is as absurd, as it would be to say, The gospel is a meer worldly institution, because it has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. The Apostle, in this passage, represents circumcision in quite a different light, as especially and eminently a seal of *spiritual* blessings.—That *baptism* is such, all allow: And therefore it comes in the room of circumcision, and stands in the place in which that once stood.

Farther; These two rites, though different in their outward form, are the *same* in their spiritual use and significancy. Circumcision signified our native corruption: so does baptism. Circumcision pointed out the necessity of inward purity and spiritual renovation: so does baptism. *That* represented

sented our justification by the blood of Christ: so does *this*. *That* was a ceremony of admission into God's church: so is *this*. *That* denoted men's relation to God and obligation to obey his law. *This* also denotes our relation to Christ and obligation to obey his gospel.

But the apostle puts this matter out of all doubt, when he calls *baptism the circumcision of Christ*, and urges christians being *baptized*, as a reason why they need not be *circumcised*.

He says, Col. 2. 11. 12. *Ye are complete in him, (in Christ) in whom ye also are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism.* The apostle here calls *baptism, the circumcision of Christ*, or the christian circumcision. But he calls it by this name without any propriety, unless it stands in the place of circumcision.

The author, whom I have several times mentioned, labours much to evade the force of this passage. He says, *By the circumcision of Christ is meant, 'the spiritual circumcision,' or renovation of the heart, in distinction from 'the literal circumcision.'* But this cannot be the meaning of the phrase: For the inward spiritual circumcision is mentioned in the preceding branch of the sentence, under the name of *the circumcision made without hands*. And if we take both phrases to signify the same; then we shall make the words to run thus. *Ye are circumcised with the spiritual circumcision, in being circumcised by the spiritual circumcision.* Such an unmeaning repetition never dropt from the Apostle.

The writer says, 'That to guard the Colossians against

against the danger of being seduced to the observance of circumcision, the Apostle tells them. 'They had received the *spiritual* circumcision—and therefore the *literal* circumcision was not necessary.' But how did this spiritual circumcision or internal renovation prove, that the literal circumcision was not necessary? Circumcision used to be necessary for good men: Why not now? According to this interpretation, external ordinances are not needful for true christians, but only for sinners. Those among the Colossians, who were not sure they had received the *spiritual* circumcision, could not apply this argument; and therefore, according to our author, must still observe the *literal* circumcision. Besides; the same argument would prove, that they need not be baptized; for if they had received the spiritual washing of sanctification, what occasion was there for the literal washing of baptism? And yet, according to him, none must be baptized, but actual believers; so that, if we admit his construction of the passage, we must disallow of all baptism.

Our author says, 'In the Apostles days, the christians converted from Judaism were zealous to incorporate circumcision with christianity.—Do the Apostles instruct them, that they need not be so tenacious of *one rite*, since another is appointed *in its stead*? Such an observation would have been much to the purpose—but nothing can be found of it in their reasonings to dissuade christians from circumcision.'

But the gentleman is under a great mistake. The *Jewish* converts were zealous to incorporate, not merely circumcision, but the whole ceremonial law, with christianity. They contended for circum-

cision

cision as a rite binding to the observance of the whole law, without which, they imagined, christianity would be incomplete. From this notion *Paul* labors to reclaim them, and secure others. He does not oppose circumcision *simply*; if he had, he would not have circumcised *Timothy*, nor have approved infant circumcision among the jewish believers; but he opposed it, in the sense above mentioned as binding men to keep the ceremonial law in order to acceptance with God. Though he had, upon prudential reasons, circumcised *Timothy*, yet he gave no place to those who would *compel Titus* to be circumcised, that they might bring him and others into bondage to the law. Now what argument does he use to dissuade the Colossian believers from circumcision and the observance of the law? It is this; They had received *baptism*, the christian circumcision, and were now bound to obey the gospel, which, being a complete institution, had superseded the law. Thus he reasons with them in the place before referred to. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ—for ye are complete in him, and so need not add the ritual law to his gospel: in whom ye are circumcised—with the circumcision of Christ, or christian circumcision, being buried with him in baptism.—Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world; if by baptism into his death ye are freed from the rites of the mosaic dispensation, why, as though living in the world, or under that dispensation, are ye subject to ordinances?* You see, that the Apostle urges their baptism into Christ, as a reason why they should not be subject to circumcision, and the rites of the ceremonial law, for which the Jews contended.

He uses the very argument to dissuade them from circumcision, which this author says, he would use, if baptism came in its place: And therefore, by his own concession, baptism does come in its place. And if so, then it is undeniably to be administered to the same subjects, even the infants of believing parents.

We are told,* that some of the believing *Jews* at *Jerusalem* were much displeas'd, when they heard that *Paul* taught the *Jews*, who were among the *Gentiles*, that they ought not to *circumcise their children*. Would it have satisfi'd such zealous contenders for infant circumcision, to have told them, baptism now came in the place of that ancient ceremony, but yet must not be apply'd to their children? This would but have provok'd them the more. Had it not been the usage of the apostles to admit children with their parents into covenant by the same rite, certainly the *Jews*, among other objections against the gospel, would have urg'd this, that it excluded their children from covenant privileges. They were apt enough to make objections, and since we find none of this sort, we may conclude, there was no room for any.

That infants, under the *patriarchal* and *mosaic* dispensations, were admitted into covenant by a particular token, is certain. It is evident, this was consider'd as a privilege. It is allow'd, that the gospel confers greater privileges than former dispensations: But if children are now shut out of covenant, then the gospel, instead of enlarging, has in this respect diminish'd our privileges.

But says our author, 'The infallibility of the
Roman

* Act. 21. 21.

Roman church may be proved in the same manner; as thus: The people of God under the Old-Testament enjoyed the benefit of infallibility. The high Priest had the Urim and Thummim, by which the mind of God was known, &c. consequently there must be infallibility in the christian church; otherwise the less perfect dispensation of *Moses* will have a great privilege beyond the *christian*.

The truth is, The *christian* dispensation has this privilege far beyond the *mosaic*. The additional revelation of the gospel discovers the mind of God as infallibly; and far more fully and extensively than ever it was discovered by Urim and Thummim.—Such *occasional* discoveries now are not needed, since we have a *complete, standing* revelation.

The author of the letters tells us, that circumcision, 'that Old-Testament rite, was a *useless, burthensome, injurious* ceremony, and treated as such by the Apostles.' And hence he concludes, baptism cannot come in its room to be administered to infants, as that was. But where do the Apostles treat circumcision in this manner? The *ceremonial law* indeed is considered as a yoke of bondage; as *burthensome*, not *injurious*, for it would ill become the teachers of religion to represent God as *injuring* his people by his institutions: But *circumcision*, considered as a token of the covenant, is treated as a great privilege.* *What advantage hath the Jews? And what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way.* It was a great privilege for the children of *Jews* to have God for their God, in such a sense as he was not the God of *heathen* children; to be born to the enjoyment of the oracles and

and ordinances of God; and to be under the care of parents, who were solemnly bound to bring them up in the knowledge and service of the God of *Israel*. And if the profit of circumcision was *much every way*, then the loss by its abolition is *much every way*, unless there be something appointed in its room.

It is often said, 'Circumcision was applied only to *males*.: Baptism is designed for both sexes, therefore they are not parallel ordinances, nor can we argue from the one to the other.'

But it is certain, they are parallel in their main design, as initiating seals of the same covenant. And *females* were admitted into covenant, as well as *males*, though no visible token was appointed for them. Every *first-born* male was to be publicly presented to God in token of the obligation of the *whole family* to be holy to him; for *if the first fruits be holy, so is the lump*. So the parent's dedicating his *males* to God by circumcision, was a token that *all his children* belonged to God. Accordingly God equally claims an interest in children of both sexes, by virtue of the covenant relation of their parents. God says to the *Jewish church*, Ezek. 16. 7. *I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine*. And then he complains, ver. 20. *Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, which thou hast born UNTO ME, and these thou hast sacrificed. Thou hast slain MY CHILDREN*. So Deut. 29. 10. *Ye stand this day before the Lord—all the men of Israel, your little ones, and your wives, that thou shouldst enter into covenant, that he may be unto thee a God—as he hath sworn to Abraham*. They were all admitted into covenant, though the *males*
only

only received the visible token. But under the gospel there is no distinction of male and female, but all are one in Christ, the visible seal being affixed to one as well as the other. In this respect the gospel dispensation is more large and free than the former, that it makes no distinction of *nation* or *sex*. And shall we think it was intended to be contracted in another respect, by cashiering *all children*, who are more than half of mankind?

The author before mentioned tells us, that 'children were admitted to the passover; and hence we may infer their right to the Lord's supper; as well as from their circumcision infer their right to baptism.'

It seems probable, that persons of all ages partook of the *first* passover mentioned Exod. 12. which was in some respects singular, and different from succeeding passovers. But it appears from Luke 2. 42. that it was not the *custom of the feast*, for parents to bring their children to it, until they were about *twelve years old*; at which age, they might be able to enquire of their parents, *What mean ye by this service?* And at this age, no doubt, many are capable of understanding the nature and end of the Lord's supper.*

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* 'Children at the age of 12 years, were brought by their parents to the temple: And from that time they began to eat of the passover and other sacrifices. Hyrcanus in Josephus, B. 12. Chap. 4. says, The Jewish law forbids the son to eat of the sacrifices, before he has come to the temple, and there himself presented an offering to God.' (Pol. Synop. in Exod. 12. 26.)

The law prescribed, that when the Jews were come into the land, which God would give them, all their males should appear before him every year at the passover, in the place which he appointed. But it is added, *They shall not appear before me empty, but every one according to the gift of his hand.* (Deut. 16. 16. and *alibi*. vide. Marg.)

The male, or men children, who were to appear before God, in their appointed place, to eat of the passover, were only such as could bring a gift in their hand; or present an offering for them-

But if infants had been usually admitted to the passover, it would not in the least weaken our argument from circumcision; for the passover was not a seal of the *Abrahamic* covenant (its being appointed more than 400 years after that covenant was made) but one of the *Mosaic* rites. Now the ritual law is superseded by the gospel; but the *Abrahamic* covenant remains. The Lord's supper is a commemorative sign, intended to shew forth Christ's death and bring him to our remembrance. But baptism is a token of admission to the visible privileges of God's people; and therefore infants are capable of *this*, though not of the other.

Some perhaps will ask, How could baptism come in place of circumcision, when it appears to have been in use before circumcision ceased? Let me ask another question, How could *Solomon* reign in

himself. This probably is the law to which Hyrcanus alludes. Bp. Patrick, who was very learned in the Jewish laws and customs, says, "When children were twelve years old, their parents were bound to bring them to the temple, at the passover, where, seeing what was done in this festival, they would be led to enquire, what mean ye by this service?" (Comment, in Exod. 12.)

As the end of the passover was to perpetuate the memory of the deliverance from Egypt, and as the express reason why children were to attend it in the appointed place, was that they might be instructed in that wonderful deliverance, parents could not view themselves as bound to bring their children to the solemnity, before they were capable of enquiring and understanding what was meant by it. Luke tells us, (Chap. 2. 42.) that the parents of Jesus went up every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover; and when he was 12 years old, they went up after the custom of the feast. Their going after the custom of the feast, doubtless intends their taking their son with them, who was now 12 years old: for it appears that he accompanied them; and this is the first time we hear of his going to the festival. It may also be observed, that the *males* only were required to appear before God at the passover; and none can imagine, that infants and sucklings were taken from their mother's arms, to be carried to, and detained at, the temple, during the continuance of so long a solemnity.

the place of *David* as his successor, when he began to reign before *David* was dead? There is no more difficulty in one question, than in the other. Though baptism was in use, yet it was not made the peculiar initiating seal of the gospel-covenant until after Christ's resurrection.

It has been enquired, 'If baptism succeeds circumcision, why were those baptized, who had already been circumcised?' We answer,

1. We think it has been proved, that both these ordinances were instituted as seals of the same gracious covenant; and therefore the right of infants to baptism, will not at all depend on the solution of this question.

2. It is evident from the 15, and 21 chapters of Acts, that *infant circumcision* was practised, with apostolic approbation, by the *Jewish* believers in the *Christian* church in Jerusalem, and in other churches, by the *Jews* who were members of them. For tho' the apostles and elders agreed, that infant circumcision ought not to be required of *Gentile* believers; yet they allowed and approved it among the *Jewish* converts, who, having been accustomed to it, and knowing it to have been a usage from the time of Abraham, could not at once, be persuaded to relinquish it for another rite.

That infant circumcision was not now regarded by the apostles merely as a *ceremony* of the *Mosaic* law, is manifest; because, in this view, as we have before shewn, they utterly disallowed it, and strenuously opposed those who contended for it. They must therefore have regarded it, as that 'seal of the righteousness of faith,' which was appointed to Abraham, and continued under the patriarchal and
mosaic

mosaic dispensations. In the christian church, it for a time held the same place among the *Jewish*, as baptism held among the *Gentile* believers. Hence it follows, that the seal of the covenant was applied to the *infants* of believers, in the time, and with the approbation of the apostles, and that baptism succeeded in the place of circumcision; as a seal of the same covenant.

It is no objection to this argument, that the apostles, *in some instances*, complied with Jewish customs, for these compliances were only *occasional*: But the observance of infant circumcision among believing jews was *general* and *constant* for a *course* of years, probably for 30 years together, and this under the eye, and with the advice of all the apostles.

They recommended to the *Gentile* believers a charitable and pacific condescension to their jewish brethren in matters, which interfered not with the institutions or doctrines of the gospel, particularly, in an abstinence from offensive meats, and in the observance of favorite days. But they never required or advised the *Gentiles* to conform to the *Jews* in the observance of the Abrahamic rite of infant circumcision, tho' this was a rite, of which the jewish christians were as tenacious as of any other. The reason is obvious: The *Gentile* believers observed another rite instituted in its place, namely, *infant baptism*.

If under the christian dispensation, infant circumcision had been, *in itself*, wrong, it would not have been allowed to the *Jewish* believers. If it had been, under present circumstances, an *indifferent* ceremony, like abstinence from meats, shaving the
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head, and purification in the temple, it would, for peace sake, have been recommended to the *Gentile* believers. But as another ordinance was by them used in its place, there would have been an impropriety in their adopting this, and therefore it was not required of them.

3. It is an undeniable fact, that *circumcised* believers were *frequently*, if not *generally*, received to fellowship, in the christian church, *without baptism*; for all churches have fellowship with the church in Jerusalem, and Jewish and Gentile believers had communion in the same churches. That Christ's first disciples were baptized, we have no evidence. That the *twelve* partook of the first supper, before christian baptism was so much as instituted, is undeniable; for it is evident from Acts 19. 5. and the author of the letters himself concedes, that *John's* baptism was not *christian* baptism. Now if circumcision was, in the case of the disciples, sufficient for their admission to the great gospel-ordinance of the supper, then certainly it was a seal of the gospel-covenant; and therefore the baptism of believers, already circumcised, was a matter not of universal necessity, but only of particular expedience. It seems to have taken place chiefly in the case of the Jews, who after Christ's resurrection, had for a time openly opposed the gospel, and the superior evidence which then attended it. Now

4. There was a manifest propriety in baptizing *some* who had been circumcised, although baptism and circumcision are supposed to be seals of the same covenant.

The long expected Messiah had now appeared; a clearer dispensation of the covenant of grace, attended

tended with larger promises and more liberal privileges, was now introduced ; the way was opened for the admission of all nations into the church of God ; and baptism was instituted to be a seal of the covenant, and a badge of distinction between the church and the unbelieving world. Though circumcision had been, and still might be a mark of discrimination between the worshippers of the true God and idolatrous heathens, yet, after the institution of baptism, the former rite would not so clearly discriminate between christians and unbelievers in general ; for unbelieving Jews would still use circumcision. It was therefore proper, that the circumcised Jew, when he embraced the gospel, if he had before openly opposed it, should submit to baptism, to testify his belief that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had rejected, was the promised Messiah ; that the doctrine preached by the apostles, in his name, was divine ; and that the ancient distinction of Jew and Gentile, male and female, was abolished, and all were to become one in Christ. Had *none* of the believing Jews been baptized, there might have remained too great an appearance of a distinction between *them* and *gentile* believers ; a distinction which, after all, many of the Jewish christians were strongly inclined to preserve, and which the apostles were no less solicitous to extinguish. It was Christ's design, that his church should be, and *appear* to be one ; that, while it was distinguished from the world, it should harmonize with itself, and keep a unity of spirit in the bond of peace.

Suppose a prince, who had appointed a particular uniform for his soldiers, should think proper,

on the introduction of a new discipline, and the acquisition of new subjects, to appoint for *these* another uniform; might we not expect, that he would allow, and in case of a rebellion raised on this occasion, would require many of his *former* subjects to adopt the same, that there might be no distinction kept up between old subjects and new, but all might become one harmonious body? And would any man, in this case, imagine that the new livery came not in the place of the old? Or that the one had not been, as the other was now, a badge and token of allegiance?—No more can we, on this ground, pretend, that baptism succeeds not in the place of circumcision.

It will perhaps be asked; ‘Why then ought not baptism to be administered on the eighth day according to the law of circumcision?’

We answer; It was not essential to the *validity* of circumcision, that it should be administered on the eighth day. It was not to be delayed beyond that day without occasion; nor ought we, without occasion, to delay baptism. But where circumstances admitted not so early an application of the seal, the delay was not faulty then, nor would it be now. Circumcision, indeed, might not be performed earlier than the eighth day: but for this delay there were particular reasons, not applicable to baptism. One reason might be the tenderness of the infant, and the weakness of the mother, which would render an immediate operation of this kind dangerous to both. But the principal reason was the legal impurity of the mother and the consequent impurity of the child for the first seven days. This reason is expressly assigned in
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the divine law ; * *If a woman have born a man child, she shall be unclean seven days—and on the eighth day he shall be circumcised.* But as the legal impurities have ceased under the gospel, there is no such reason for the delay of baptism.

Thus, I think, it undeniably appears, that baptism stands in the place of circumcision, and that the arguments to the contrary, are futile and impertinent. And if it stands in the same place, it is certainly to be applied to the same subjects, the infants of God's people.—I proceed to another argument.

DISCOURSE III.

3. **T**HE right of infants to baptism may be clearly inferred from the words of our Saviour, Mark 10. 14. compared with those, John 3. 5. *Suffer little children to come to me—for of such is the kingdom of God.—And, Except a man (ean me tis, except any one) be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

By the kingdom of God must be understood either the Church, God's visible kingdom on earth ; or Heaven, his invisible kingdom above. Into the former we are admitted by baptism, which is the sign of that spiritual renovation, by which we are prepared for the latter. These little children are called

* Levit. 12. 1. 2.

called *infants* ; they were *brought* to Christ ; were *taken up in his arms* ; doubtless therefore they were under the age of discretion. They who brought them were *believers* ; otherwise they would not have sought a *blessing* from Christ for them. The phrase being *born of water*, signifies being *baptized* : So the author of the letters understands it, and numbers it among the passages that speak of baptism.*

Now if, by the *kingdom of God*, we understand the *church*, then here is an express declaration, that infants belong to the church, are Christ's disciples and visible members of his body : And consequently have a right to *baptism*, the only instituted sign of admission into this kingdom. *Except any one be born of water, he cannot enter into this kingdom.* Hence the christian church is said to be *cleansed by the washing of water*.† If by the *kingdom of God*, we understand the *invisible kingdom* above, then here is a plain declaration, that infants belong to *that*, and consequently may be *born of the spirit* ; for *except one be born of the spirit, he cannot enter into that kingdom*, which flesh and blood do not inherit. And if they may be *born of the spirit*, doubtless they may be *born of water*, or baptized. As the church is the *gate* of heaven, so baptism is the

* The author of the letters says, 'Christian baptism was not yet instituted.' This is doubtless true : but John preached, saying, *The kingdom of God is at hand* ; and he baptized with the baptism of repentance to prepare the people for this kingdom. It was therefore very seasonable for Christ now to instruct *Nicodemus*, that baptism, or *being born of water*, was soon to be the rite of admission into his kingdom. But whether we understand the phrase, of *outward baptism*, or *inward sanctification*, our argument from it will be equally conclusive.

† Eph. 5. 26.

the *sign* of regeneration. And if they may be admitted into heaven *by regeneration*, they may be admitted into the church *by baptism*. If the *things signified* belong to them, the *sign* and *token* must be supposed to belong to them. The Apostle *Peter** plainly teaches us, that they, to whom the promise of the spirit pertains, have a right to baptism, the sign of the promise. In whatever sense therefore we understand the *kingdom of God*, the conclusion is the same, That infants are subjects of baptism.

It cannot reasonably be said, that the words—*of such*—intend only persons of a childlike disposition : For then how would this be a reason why little children should be brought to Christ, and why he should be displeas'd with his disciples for endeavouring to hinder them ? This makes our Lord's argument run thus. Suffer infants to be brought to me, for my kingdom consisteth *only* of adult persons resembling children in their disposition. He elsewhere makes *Lambs* and *Doves* emblems of a christian temper ; and according to this interpretation, he might as well have said, Suffer *Lambs* and *Doves* to come to me, for *of such* is the kingdom of God ; i. e. it consists of persons of a lamb-like and dove-like temper.

Well, ' but the christian rite of baptism was not given to these children ; they were bro't to Christ for his blessing and prayers, accompanied with imposition of hands.' True : but our Saviour declares, that such, i. e. the infants of believers, belong to this kingdom, into which none are admitted, but by being *born of water* ; so that here is a plain declaration,

declaration, that infants were to be introduced into his church by baptism. And by taking them into his arms, praying for them, and blessing them, he shewed that *such* are capable subjects of the influence and blessing of the Spirit, which are the things represented in baptism. He did not pour water on them ; but he performed a ceremony quite as sacred and solemn, and thus shewed, that infants are meet subjects of that external rite, which denotes the conveyance of spiritual blessings ; and such a rite is the ordinance of baptism.

4. The baptismal commission, Mat. 28. 19. gives a plain warrant for admitting infants to baptism. It runs thus. *Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe, &c.*

Some will say, '*Infants* are not expressly mentioned here.' True : neither are *Adults*. But Christ uses the word, *nations*, which is a collective term, and must naturally be understood as including *both*. And had he intended to teach his Apostles, that persons of every age must be admitted to baptism, he could not have chosen any single word to express it better. *Baptize all nations*. The christian church is called a *nation*, a *people*, because it consists of persons of every age.*

But it is objected ; '*Teaching* is required previous to baptism, which infants are not capable of.'

Here let it be observed, that the word *Mathe-tysate*, rendered *Teach*, is not the same which is commonly used for *teaching*, but of a more general signification. The proper import of it is, to *prose-lyte*

* 1. Pet. 2. 9.

lyte or *make disciples*. The commission then is this. *Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them—teaching them to observe all things, &c.* Here are two words in the commission rendered, *Teaching*. The latter *didaskontēs*, signifies to *indoctrinate*; the other is more general, and signifies to *make disciples*, which may be done by introduction into a school in order to future teaching.

Now if we can shew, that *Infants* are ever considered as *disciples*—as *belonging to Christ*, then it will appear that they come within the commission, *Disciple all nations, baptizing them*. We are told Mat. 18. 5. That Jesus having set a *little child* before him, said, *Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me*. To receive one in *Christ's name*, is to receive him as being *Christ's disciple* and as *belonging to him*. So the phrase is explained, Mark 9. 41. *Whosoever shall give you a cup of water in my Name, because ye belong to Christ*. And Mat. 10. 42. *Whosoever shall give to one of these little ones a cup of water only in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward*. It is plain here that *infants*, who are to be received in *Christ's name* may be *his disciples* and *belong to him*, to his church and kingdom. Accordingly they who contended, that persons under the gospel ought to be circumcised after the manner of *Moses*, are said to *tempt God to put a yoke on the necks of the disciples*, Act. 15. 10. *Infants* were to be circumcised after the manner of *Moses*, and therefore are comprehended among the *disciples*, on whom the yoke would be laid. The commission then must respect infants as well as others. The Apostles had before been instructed to receive not only adults, but

also

also little children in *Christ's name*, and as *his disciples*. Now a particular *rite* is appointed, by which they should receive or disciple them in his name. *Disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, &c.*

But the author of the letters says, 'The disciples of Christ, during his ministry on earth, as well as the disciples of *John*, were well acquainted with the institution of baptism, for they baptized great multitudes; but they administered a baptism in which infants had *no part*. When therefore our Lord instituted his sacrament of baptism, if infants were to be received into it, it cannot be doubted but he *declared* this; otherwise men, who had been used to exclude infants, would not think of them as coming within this fresh commission.'

He expressly allows, that the Apostles would be determined very much by former usages, in judging whether infants came within this commission. Whether the disciples of *John* and of Christ had been wont to baptize infants, it is not expressly said. And therefore to judge how the Apostles would understand their commission, we must go farther back than to *John's* ministry. These Apostles were *Jews*. They had been educated in the *Jewish* religion. They knew, that from the days of *Abraham*, and all along through the *mo-saic* dispensation, infants had been taken into covenant with their parents by the same initiating rite.— They knew, this had ever been esteemed a great privilege; and they would naturally suppose, the privilege was still to continue, as the *Abrahamic* covenant was yet in force. They knew it had been the constant inmemorial practice of the *Jewish* church,

church, to receive *gentile* profelytes and their infant children with them by baptism. This the ancient *Jewish* writers testify. Baptism, we know, was no new thing in *John's* time. The *Jews* appear to have been well acquainted with it. They don't ask him, What meanest thou by this *new* ceremony? *But why baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that Prophet?* Their question implies, that the *Prophets* had been wont to baptize, and they expected *Christ* and *Elias* would do the same. *John* probably took up baptism, as he found it practised in the *Jewish* church, where it had been constantly administered to the *infants* of *gentile* profelytes. And it is not only without proof, but against probability, that this author asserts, 'Infants had no *part* in *John's* baptism.' Farther, these Apostles had been taught to look upon infants as *belonging to Christ*, and to treat them as *his disciples*. They had heard *Christ* pronounce them subjects of his kingdom, and give directions, that they should be brought to him. They had been reprimanded for attempting to hinder infants from being brought. They knew, that *Christ* came not to lessen the privileges of the church, (of which the admission of infants was one) but to enlarge them; and that *baptism* was now the *rite* of admission into it. Under these circumstances, how must they understand their commission? Certainly, upon this author's principles, they must suppose it to include infants; for he allows, they would understand it according to former usage. We may then retort his argument. When *Christ* instituted his sacrament of baptism, if infants were *not* to be received to it, it cannot be doubted, but

he sufficiently *declared* this ; otherwise men, who had always been used to see infants admitted into the church of God by the same token with their parents, would consider them as coming within this fresh commission, *Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them.*

Besides, When they saw the doors of the church now enlarged to admit *new* subjects, even *all* nations, they would not imagine, that the subjects, who had ever been admitted, were in future to be excluded. The commission therefore must be understood as a virtual command to baptize infants.

5. Childrens right to baptism is very clearly taught, in those words of *Peter* to the awakened *Jews*, *Act. 2. 38. Repent and, be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is to you and to your children.* He does not say, *The promise is to you, and will be to your children* when they become believers ; but it is to both, to you and the children which you *now* have : *And to all them that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call, i. e.* wherever God sends the gospel to call the *Gentiles*; it carries this promise, which is in like manner to *them* and *their* children. The promise being made to *them*, is urged as a reason why *they* should be baptized. And the same reason holds for the baptism of all to whom the promise belongs ? and consequently for the baptism of their *children*, for the promise is to *them*. *Be baptized—for the promise is to you and to your children.* The reason assigned for baptism is such as equally takes place with respect to both. If the parents interest in the promise is a reason why

why *he* should be baptized, his childrens interest in it, is just as good a reason, why *they* should be baptized. To suppose this promise is a just ground for the baptism of *believers*, but not for the baptism of *their children*, is to make the apostle talk thus absurdly and incoherently. The promise is to you, therefore be ye baptized—and the same promise is equally to your children, yet they must *not* be baptized.

Well, but our brethren say, ‘ You and your children is nothing more than you and your posterity,’ or your children when they become adult.

But a little attention will convince us, this cannot be the meaning. This is contrary to the natural construction of the words—*The promise is—to your children* ; not *shall be to them*, when they become believers. The people, to whom these words were spoken, were *Jews* and *Profelytes*, who had always been used to see infants comprehended with their parents in covenant transactions, and therefore would naturally suppose, their infants to be intended. To suppose that by *your children*, the Apostle meant only their adult descendants, is to make him speak nonsense ; for then he must be understood thus, ‘ The promise is to you and your children, but not as *your* children, or as being related to you, any more than if they were children of *Pagans* ; but if they should live to adult age, should be called by the gospel, and should believe, then the promise *will be* to them, as it is *now* to you.’

Now why are children joined with their parents, as joint partakers of the same promise, if they derive no benefit from this relation, but are to stand upon precisely the same footing with the children
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of heathens and infidels? Farther; it should be remembered, that the great promise of the *Abrahamic* covenant, which probably is here referred to, & called by way of eminence, **THE PROMISE**, viz. *I will be a God to you and your seed*; this promise, I say, did certainly belong to the infant children of *Abraham*, and of his *spiritual seed*; and the seal of this promise was expressly ordered to be applied to such. But our brethren generally say, 'The promise here intended is the promise of the spirit, contained in the foregoing words, *Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*' Be it so. If then it appears that the promise of the Spirit is in fact made, not only to believers, but also to their children, even to infants; the reason will hold, why they should be baptized. It is expressly promised, *Isai. 44. 3. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; i. e. thy little ones*, as the following words shew; and they (thine offspring) shall **SPRING UP** as among the grass and as willows by the water-courses. They shall grow up under the influences of my Spirit and blessings of my covenant, as grass under the kindly smiles of heaven, and as willows by the fertile banks of rivers.

There can be no doubt with any one who believes the scriptures, but the divine Spirit often has great influence in forming the mind into a preparation for virtue and usefulness, even in its infant state. *John* was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. *Isaiab* was called and formed from the womb. *Jeremiah* was sanctified from the womb. *Samuel* grew up before the Lord. I question not but all, who are born and educated under

under the gospel covenant, have, even in early childhood, some gentle excitations to virtue from the Spirit of grace, as a fruit of this promise to believers and their children. Now since the promise of the Spirit does in fact belong to little children, baptism, the sign of the promise, belongs to them also. *Let them be baptized—for the promise is to them.* Note here; their receiving the Spirit was not a *condition*, but a *consequence* of their baptism. *Be baptized and ye shall receive, &c.* So upon the *Samaritans* mentioned, Act. 8. the Spirit was poured out after they were baptized: So that children are to be baptized upon this general promise, even before they can, by a holy life, give evidence of their having actually received the Spirit. That in the gospel-age, as well as in former dispensations, children should be received into covenant together with, and upon the faith of their parents, is plainly foretold, *Isai. 65. 22. They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.* And chap. 49. 18. 22. *They (the gentiles) shall gather themselves together, and come to thee—And they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.*

6. The accounts we have of some whole families being baptized, upon the faith of their respective heads, afford an argument of considerable weight, that the Apostles understood their commission as extending to infants, and practised accordingly.

If infants were baptized, it is by no means probable, we should be informed of their names or ages; we could expect only to be told in general, that such persons were baptized and their families: And so much we are told. Paul baptized the household

of *Stephanas*, 1. Cor. 1. 16. *Lydia*, when the Lord opened her heart to receive the word, was baptized and *her household*, Act. 16. 15. The *Jaylor*, upon his believing was baptized, he and *all his*, ver. 33.

This *Lydia* was of the city of *Thyatira*; but she now dwelt at *Philippi*; here she had a house, in which she lodged the Apostles for some time, and she had a household with her. Whether they were children or servants, or both, and what their exact ages were, it is not said, nor is it material. The story represents *them as* baptized upon *her faith*; and this is all that is to the purpose. It will be suggested perhaps, that they might be baptized upon *their own* faith. But the story gives no intimation of any one's believing, but *Lydia*. Take the account as *Luke* has left it, and *they* were baptized upon *her* being judged faithful to the Lord.

The story of the *Jaylor* is to the same purpose. He enquired of the Apostles, *what must I do to be saved?* They say, *Believe on the Lord, and thou shalt be saved and thine house.* In the same sense, salvation is said to come to the house of *Zaccheus*, because *he* was a son of *Abraham*, i. e. a believer. So such as are added to the church are called, *The saved.* There were doubtless some present on this occasion besides the *Jaylor's* family; and some of his family might be adults; and therefore it is said, *They spake the word to him, and to all that were in his house.* It is added, *He was baptized,* He and all his *straitway.* It is not said, All that were in *his house* were baptized; but he and all his, i. e. such as were at his disposal—under his government—subject to his command. These were properly
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his. No mention is yet made of any one's believing, but the *Jaylor* himself. But do not the next words, *He rejoiced believing in God with all his house*, import, that all his family believed as well as he? I think not. The greek words *egalliasato panoiki pepisteukos to theo* are literally rendered thus, *He rejoiced in all his house, having believed God*. The idea conveyed is this: After he had believed God, he rejoiced and gave thanks in the presence, and in behalf of his whole family.

Now as it had been the ancient universal practice, to receive infants with their parents into the church of God, they who should read these accounts of households baptized, would naturally conclude, that infants (if there were such) were baptized as well as others. If a Missionary sent from this country, where infant baptism is generally practised, to gospelize the heathen, should write back an account of his success; and therein should say, he had baptized so many hundreds, and amongst the rest, such a noted person and his *household*—such an one and *all his*; who would doubt, but there were some children, under the age of discretion, whom he meant to include? But if an Antipædobaptist Missionary should publish an account of the households he had baptized, he would naturally except infants, to prevent mistakes.

7. The right of infants to baptism is farther confirmed by several particular passages of scripture.

It may be inferred from those words of the Apostle. Rom. 11. 16. 17. *If the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches (the Jews) be broken off, and thou (a Gentile) being a wild olive,*
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were grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not, &c.

The *olive-tree* is the church of God, built on the covenant made with *Abraham*. Of this tree the *Jews* were the *natural*; the *Gentiles*, the *ingrafted* branches. The *root* and *fatness* of the tree, are the privileges and blessings of the covenant. It was one privilege of the covenant, that children should be admitted into the church with their parents and consecrated to God as his children. Therefore if the *Gentiles* are grafted into the *same* stock, from which some of the *Jews* are broken off, and with them who remain, partake of the *root* and *fatness*, they certainly partake of this privilege of having their children grafted with them. Accordingly the *Gentiles* are declared to be *fellow-heirs* with the *Jews*—to be of the *same body*—to be *joint-partakers* of the promise. God promised, that he would be a God to *Abraham* and his seed. And is he a God of the *Jews* only? And not of the *Gentiles*? Doubtless of the *Gentiles* also. God appointed a token of this promise to be applied to *Abraham's* infants, and to the infants of his seed: And if we stand in the same place as his natural seed, and are partakers with them of the same privileges, then the token of the promise is to be applied to our infants.

To this passage we may add that remarkable one, in 1 Cor. 7. 14. *The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.* It is plain here, that the children of *believers* are, in some sense or other, *holy*,

or *saints*, by virtue of their parents faith. They are distinguished from the children of *unbelievers*, who are called *unclean*, in the same manner as *christians* are distinguished from *heathens*. Now what is this infant-holiness, which results from the parents' faith? It cannot be *legitimacy*, as some pretend; for surely the apostle did not mean to *bastardize* all children born of heathen parents. It cannot be *real*, *inherent* holiness; for in this sense, *they are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God*. It can then be no other, than *relative* or *covenant* holiness. The children of believers are holy, as all the people of Israel were holy, by a special covenant-relation to God. The christian church is called a *holy nation* and *peculiar people*, in the same sense. They are holy, as all the first born under the law are holy, by a solemn dedication to God in his temple. In allusion to the dedication of the first-born infants, the christian church is called, *The church of first-born persons*. They are holy, as being *God's children, born to him* of his own covenant-people. Now if they are in this sense holy, by what rite or ceremony are they declared so, but by the washing of baptism? *The church is cleansed by the washing of water*. If they are holy as being *God's children*, and within *his covenant*, they are certainly entitled to the *mark* of his children and the *token* of his covenant, which is baptism.

The manner in which the author of the letters endeavours to evade these passages, shews that he felt himself embarrassed with them. I am very willing, says he, that children should be as holy as the most benevolent person can wish them. I have no inclination to lay a stain upon that innocent age.—

age.—But here is not a word about their baptism. The gentleman doubtless knew how we argue from these texts to prove infant baptism. Why has he not shewn, that they must, or *may* be taken in some other sense? Why has he not told us, how the branches are holy by the holiness of the root; how children are holy by their parents faith, in some other sense than as being intitled to the privileges and seal of the covenant? How the *Gentiles* can be partakers of the same promise, and of the same root and fatness with *Abraham's* natural seed, and yet not be admitted to the same privileges? The truth is, the argument from these texts is unanswerable.* Again.

* To evade the argument from this passage, some have said 'The same holiness, which is ascribed to the *children* of the believer is also ascribed to the *unbelieving partner*, who is said to be *sanctified* as well as the offspring said to be holy. Why then is not the unbelieving husband, or wife, a member of the church by virtue of the faith of the correlate, as well as the children, by virtue of the faith of the parent?

In answer to this I would observe; Infants, under the Old Testament, had ever been received as members of God's church. But when the Jews, in the time of Ezra, had, contrary to an express law married strange wives, by whom children were born to them, it was ordered that these children, with their heathen parents, should be put away, as unclean; and the men, who refused to put away their strange wives, were themselves to be separated from the congregation.

In the Corinthian church a doubt had arisen, whether a believer might continue with an unbelieving correlate. This question the apostle answers in the affirmative. For though he advises christians to marry only in the Lord, yet a marriage, contracted when both the parties were unbelievers, is not dissolved by the subsequent faith of one of them. But it might farther be enquired, whether children born of parents, of whom one was a heathen, ought not to be excluded from the church with the unclean or heathen parent, as had been determined in the time of Ezra? To this the apostle answers in the negative. *If a brother have a wife who believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away, and so of the wife who hath an unbelieving husband. For the unbelieving husband is, or hath been, sanctified by the wife; or rather, sanctified in, or to the wife; and*

Again. The Apostle, in the 4th chap. to Gal. tells us, that *Isaac was born after the Spirit, and born by promise.* By this he illustrates the gospel covenant; and says, *As Isaac was, so are we the children*

the unbelieving wife hath been sanctified in, or to the husband. The unbelieving is sanctified in respect of, and in relation to the believing party, so that the latter has a lawful use and enjoyment of the former; for as the apostle says elsewhere, *to the pure all things are pure; and every creature of God is good, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*—*Else were your children unclean.* If the unbelieving partner were not sanctified to the use of the believer, both the parents must be rejected from the church, the former as a heathen and unclean, the latter as criminally living in cohabitation with a heathen; as, in the time of Ezra, those who refused to put away the strange wives, whom they had unlawfully taken, were to be separated from the congregation. Consequently the children would be unclean, because both the parents would be so. But since the unbeliever is sanctified in relation to the believer, the children are *holy*, and so to be accounted members of the church.

The unbeliever is here said to be sanctified, not in relation to God, but only in relation to his, or her yokefellow. But the children are said to be *holy*, in opposition to the *unclean*, or to *beaten*. A person's being sanctified in a particular respect, or for a certain purpose, as the unbeliever is here said to be sanctified only in relation to the husband, or the wife, does not denominate him a *holy one*, which is, in scripture, the appropriate title of those who belong to the church. Therefore, though children are members of the church, as descended from, and under the care and government of a believing parent, yet a heathen becomes not a member of the church by marriage with a believer. The words of the apostle can convey no such idea. For he calls children *holy* in opposition to the *unclean*; but he expressly defines and limits the sense, in which the unbeliever is sanctified. It is merely in respect of, and in relation to the believing correlate.

The sense which we have given of the phrase, *sanctified by, or to the wife*, is approved by critical expositors, particularly by *Whitby*, who says, it is the sense given by the *Greek interpreters*; and it is certainly agreeable to the phrase in the original. The apostle cannot intend, that the unbeliever is *converted to the faith* by the believer; for this sanctification is something which has already taken place, while the subject was an unbeliever. The conversion of the unbeliever by the influence of the believing correlate, the apostle afterward mentions, as an additional reason for cohabitation; but he speaks of it as a change which *hopefully may*, not as what *already has*, or *certainly will take place.* *What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? And how knowest thou, O man, whether thou wilt save thy wife?*

children of the promise : i. e. we are *born* children of the promise, as being born of covenanted parents. Accordingly the Apostle to the *Hebrews* speaks of the privileges of the covenant, as being the *birth-right* of christians, and cautions them, that they do not profanely sell *their* birth-right, as *Esau* did his.

And it is worthy to be noted, that the same titles, by which *christians* are distinguished from *heathens*, are expressly applied to the *children* of converted parents. Are christians called *saints*? So are their children.* Are they called *disciples*? So are their children.† Do they belong to God's kingdom? So do their children.‡ Are they called *believers*? So christian families, which were supported by a common stock, in which infants were included, are called *the multitude of them that believe*.§ And Christ speaks of those *little ones* which *believe in him*.|| Are christians called the *children of God*? So are the infants of professors.¶ They that belong to the church are called *the saved*; so salvation comes to the *house* of the believer.†† Who, that considers, how these titles are promiscuously given to *adult* christians and *their* children, can doubt, but that children are brought into covenant with their parents in the gospel-time, as they used to be before, and consequently are subjects of baptism, the only initiating seal?

8. I shall add to the preceding arguments, one more taken from 1 Cor. 10. 2. The Apostle here, speaking of the *Jews* who came out of *Egypt*, says, *They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*

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* 1 Cor. 7. 14.

† Act. 15. 10.

‡ Mark 10. 14.

§ Act. 4. 32.

|| Mat. 18. 6.

¶ Ezek. 16. 21.

†† Luke 19. 9.

That this passage alludes to christian baptism, our brethren, particularly the author of the letters, allow. The Apostle plainly considers *their* baptism into *Moses* as typical of *our* baptism into *Christ*; for he adds, *They did all drink of the same spiritual drink; for they drank of the rock, which followed them, and that rock is Christ* or a type of Christ.— *All these things happened to them for examples, or types, and are written for our admonition.* The *Jewish* writers say, ‘The people were baptized in the desert and admitted into covenant with God before the law was given.’ Now if the Apostle has any respect to christian baptism, as it is plain he has, here is an undeniable proof of the right of infants to baptism. For he says, *They all, the whole congregation, of which infants then in their parents arms were a great part, they all were baptized into Moses. All were under the cloud. All passed through the sea, &c.* He repeats the universal term *all* because it is *emphatical* here. Now if this baptism into *Moses*, was a type and written for our admonition, it typically admonishes us, that we *all* should be baptized into *Christ*, not *believers only*, but their *children* also.

As the whole congregation were baptized and admitted into covenant at the sea, when *Moses* took the command of them, so this covenant was again renewed with *all*, both men, women and *little ones*, just before he left them. Deut. 29. 10. *Ye stand, all of you before the Lord your God, your Elders, your little ones, your wives, that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord, that he may establish thee for a people unto himself, and may be unto thee a G. I., as he hath sworn to thy Father, to Abraham, &c.*

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This covenant with *Abraham*, which is so expressly renewed with *little ones*, is descended to us and our children.

I shall now briefly recapitulate the arguments that have been offered, and present them in one view.

The covenant, which God made with *Abraham* and his seed, expressly included *infants*; and the seal thereof was, by God's command, applied to *them*. We, believing *Gentiles*, are the seed for whom the covenant with *Abraham* was made; and therefore *our* infants as well as *his*, are entitled to the privileges of the covenant, and subjects of the seal of it, by virtue of the original grant to *Abraham*, in as much as that grant has never been recalled. This covenant was renewed at the *red sea*—and again in the plains of *Moab*, and still infants are expressly included.—All along under the Old Testament, children are comprehended with parents in all covenant-transactions between God and his people, and the token of the covenant is still applied to them. The Prophets often foretell, that the case would be the same in the gospel time; that Christ should gather the *lambs* with his arms—that God would pour his Spirit upon the *offspring* of his people, who should be the seed of the blessed of the Lord, & their *offspring with them*. In the *Jewish* church, it was a custom, long before our Saviour's appearance, to receive *gentile* profelytes *with their children*, by baptism as well as circumcision. Christ also himself took infants into his arms and blessed them, and directed that they should be brought to him, because of such was his kingdom, that kingdom, into which persons were to be admitted by being born of water. He ordered his Apostles to
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receive them in his name, and treat them as his disciples. When he gave the baptismal commission, he expressed it in such universal terms, as must naturally include infants: And the Apostles, knowing what had been the constant usage concerning infants, and how Christ had ever treated them, must understand the commission as extending to such. Accordingly, soon after, when they invited the convicted *Jews* to baptism, they placed their right to it upon the foot of a promise, which equally belonged to them and their children. When they baptized the head of any family in his own house, they baptized his family with him. They constantly taught, that the covenant with *Abraham*, of which circumcision was the seal, is the same which we are now under; and that the blessings of it are come upon us *Gentiles*—that the *Gentiles* are grafted into the same stock, from which the *Jews* were broken off—that children are holy by virtue of their parents' faith—that baptism is the christian circumcision, and therefore they who are baptized into Christ, are freed from the literal circumcision, and all other ancient rites—that circumcision, as a seal of the *Abrahamic* covenant, was a great privilege; but the gospel-dispensation confers greater—They illustrate the gospel-covenant by ancient examples of covenant-transactions, in which infants were included; by the case of *Isaac*, who was *born* after the promise, by *Noah's* ark, in which his whole family were saved in consequence of *his* faith; the like figure whereunto even baptism now saves us; and by the baptism of the *whole* congregation, infants and all, at the red sea, which was a type, and written for our admonition. When we consider these things,

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we think the evidence abundantly clear, that the infants of believers are entitled to baptism.



DISCOURSE IV.

HAVING laid before you the arguments by which the right of infants to baptism is vindicated, I shall now, as I proposed,

III. Shew you the rational ends and moral uses of infant baptism.

If baptism be a divine institution for the infants of believers, it ought to be applied to them, whether we can see the uses of it or not : But still it may give us some satisfaction to understand what good ends it can answer.

We are often asked, ‘ What good can baptism do to *infants* ? ’ It might suffice to reply, As much good as circumcision could do to them formerly ; or as much as the public presentation of first-born infants to God could do *them*. The Apostle says, The profit of *circumcision*, (which was usually administered to infants) was much every way. The profit of *infant baptism* may be as much.—Particularly,

I. It is evident, that God treats infants as sinners for *Adam’s* transgression. In consequence of *his* apostacy, *they* suffer a sad variety of pains and diseases, which often issue in early death. And from that bias and inclination to evil, which they soon discover

cover, there is reason to suppose, they are infected with some moral disorder, which needs to be removed in order to their entrance into the world of glory. *By one man*, says the Apostle, *sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passes upon all men, for that all have sinned.—By one man's offence, judgment came upon all to condemnation.—In Adam all die.—By his offence many are made sinners.* In this language, he speaks in the 5th chap. to the Romans.

Now the gospel assures us, that Christ has obtained redemption from the condemnation of sin, and that in this redemption, all who believe, are unfailingly interested. But we see, that a very great part of the human race are cut off in infancy, while they are incapable of actual faith. What becomes of *them*? Is any provision made for *their* salvation? Or must *they* perish and be lost for ever? This is a natural enquiry. Now to comfort our minds concerning *such*, God has seen fit to assure us, that they may become partakers of redemption by Christ, and be made heirs of the kingdom above, notwithstanding their incapacity for an *actual* compliance with those terms which are proposed to the adult. And to confirm our faith & hope in his promise, he has appointed, that they shall be received with their believing parents into his visible kingdom, the church, and have the seal of his covenant affixed to them.

The great promise of the covenant is, that God will be a God to believers and *their* seed. This promise is often explained in scripture to import the happiness of the life to come. And God's appointing the seal of this promise to be applied to our
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infant seed, is a most comfortable ground of our faith and hope, that if they should be removed by an early death, they will be transplanted into that happy clime, where they will spring up in everlasting life.*

God is said to have established his covenant with the cattle and the fowls, when he engaged no more to drown the earth, with a flood; and as a token of this covenant, he appointed his bow in the cloud.

* The children of believing parents may be said to be born in covenant, as they are born under that promise of the covenant, *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed.* Accordingly God calls them HIS children, born to HIM. To those who die in infancy this promise may be understood as importing a resurrection to eternal life. As the Apostle argues concerning the patriarchs, (Heb. 11.) so we may reason concerning these; since they enjoy no distinguishing favor in this world, there must be some good reserved for them in another; else the promise fails. *Therefore God is not ashamed to be called Their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.* To those who arrive to moral agency, the promise may import, not only the enjoyment of the external means of religion, but the attendant influences of the divine spirit. The Apostle tells us, that among the many advantages of circumcision, this is one of the chief, *that to them are committed the oracles of God.* (Rom. 3. 1.) And God expressly promises to Jacob his servant, and to Israel whom he has chosen, *I will pour my spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the watercourses.* (Mai. 44. 3.) Their interest in this promise, as the children of God's servants, is one ground of their admission to baptism, the token of God's faithfulness, and of their obligation to serve him. But then it is, by baptism, that they are declared to be within the church, and entitled to the visible privileges of it. Persons may be *virtually* in covenant by their own, or their parents faith; but they are not *visibly* and *professedly* in covenant, or in the church, till they have passed under the appointed ceremony. When we speak of persons being admitted into the church by baptism, we mean not, that this conveys the right of admission; for it presupposes the *right*, and the *qualification* or *relation*, in which the right, by divine institution, is founded: but that it *declares* the right, and thus introduces to *visible* privileges. God says, 'The uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from among his people, he hath broken my covenant.' He was previously in covenant, else he could not be said to break it by his uncircumcision. So also the unbaptized person is to be cut off, or excluded from the privileges of the christian church.

cloud. And surely he may, in as just and rational a sense, establish the covenant of grace with infants, engaging to pour his spirit and blessing upon them, and appointing the seal of this covenant to be affixed to them, in token of his faithfulness to fulfil his gracious promise.

2. The parent, by dedicating his children to God in baptism, solemnly binds himself to give them a religious and christian education, and to use his influence, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, and not put themselves out of that covenant, into which they have been thus visibly introduced. Now if it is any privilege for children to have a religious education, it is a privilege that such an education should be *secured* to them; and consequently a privilege that the parent, by this public transaction, should *covenant* and *engage* to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

It may be asked perhaps, How a parent can covenant for his children? But the answer is obvious. He can covenant for *himself* to discharge such and such duties to them, and can commend them to God, in hope of the divine blessing upon his pious endeavours. In this sense may every religious parent, as Joshua did, covenant for his house, *As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*

3. As the parent, who dedicates his children, should consider himself bound, by his own act to educate them religiously; so children thus dedicated, when they come to the age of reflection, should realize, that, having been given to God, they are not *their own*, but *his*; and are bound to live, not to *themselves*, but to *him* whose they are; and that

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a wicked, irreligious life is a practical renunciation of their baptism, and disavowal of their relation to the God of their Fathers.

If the *Jewish* parent, by circumcising his children, bound them to own and serve the God of *Israel*.—If the vow of *Sampson's* parents bound *him* to be a *Nazarite* forever—If *Hannah's* vow bound *Samuel* to attend upon God in the sanctuary ; as well may the act of the *christian* parent, in bringing his children to baptism, bind them to serve the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The religious parent may urge his children to a godly life by this argument, that he has given them to God. Thus the mother of king *Lemuel* expostulates with him.* *What my son ? And what the son of my womb ? And what the son of my vows ?* And this argument will have weight with children of an ingenuous temper. Thus the Psalmist reasons with himself.† *I will walk before the Lord. I will call on his name. I will pay my vows in the presence of his people. O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid.*—I pass on,

IV. To consider the practice of the christian church with respect to infants immediately after the *Apostolic* age.

The author of the letters say, 'It is of small importance to christians, to know what the many writers upon this subject, since the time of the Evangelists and Apostles, have affirmed.' But yet to know what they have affirmed concerning the *mode* of baptism, he thinks to be of no small importance.

He asserts, upon their authority, that the church for 1300 years practised *immersion* ; though indeed

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* Prov. 31. 2.

† Psal. 119. 6.

he allows, that *sprinkling* was practised too in extraordinary cases. Upon the same authority it may be asserted, that the church, for many hundreds of years, practised *infant baptism*; and not a *single* person, much less a church, can be produced which denied the *lawfulness* of it. And the practice of the church is as good an evidence in favour of *infant baptism*, as it would have been in favour of *immersion*, in case that *alone* had been practised.—This gentleman himself (perhaps inadvertently) allows the early, constant, universal practice of admitting infants to baptism. For he adopts this passage from Dr. Wall, ‘All christians in the world, who never owned the Pope’s authority, do now, and ever did, dip their *infants* in the *ordinary* use.’ (Not universally, but *ordinarily* dipt them.) If they *dipt* infants, they *baptized* them. This practice is of much more weight to prove *infants* are the *subjects*, than to prove *dipping* is the *mode* of baptism; because dipping was but the *ordinary* use, whereas *infant-baptism*, for ought that appears, was the *universal* practice of the ancient church, except in cases of *profelytism*.

We do not pretend to rest the proof of infants right to baptism upon the practice of the church, but upon the authority of scripture. However, if it appears, that the church, soon after the Apostles, did admit them, and there is no account of any church that rejected them, or any person who denied the *lawfulness* of the practice, or pretended, that it was an *innovation*, this will be an argument of considerable weight, that it was derived from the Apostles: For the early christians, they who lived in the ages next after the Apostles, must have known,

known, what *their* practice was in such a matter as this, which was of a most public nature, and concerned the very being of the church. What the usage of the church was, in the earliest times after the Apostles, we can learn only from the ancient writers, who are here produced, not as *examples*, but only as *historians*, or witnesses to a plain matter of fact.

Justin Martyr, who wrote about 40 years after the apostolic age, says, ‘We have not received the carnal, but the spiritual circumcision by baptism—And it is enjoined to all persons to receive it in the same way.’ Here he plainly considers baptism as succeeding in the place of circumcision, and consequently as being designed for infants as *that* was; which opinion he could not easily have fallen into, if the Apostles had universally, both in doctrine and practice, rejected infants. In one of his apologies for the christians, he says, ‘Several persons among us, of 60 and 70 years old, who were *made disciples to Christ from their childhood*, do continue uncorrupt.’ *Made disciples*. He uses the same word which is used in the commission; *Disciple all nations baptizing them*. If they were *made disciples*, they were doubtless baptized.

Irenæus, who wrote about 67 years after the Apostles, and was born it is said, before the death of St. *John*, and was acquainted with *Polycarp*, who was *John’s* disciple, says concerning Christ, ‘He came to save all persons by himself, who by him are regenerated (i. e. *baptized*) unto God, infants, little ones, youths and elderly persons.’ That *Irenæus* used the word *regenerated* to signify *baptized*, is plain from his own words, where he says, ‘When
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Christ gave his disciples the command of *regenerating* unto God, he said, Go and teach all nations, *baptizing* them, &c.'

Tertullian, who flourished about 100 years after the Apostles, gives a plain testimony, that the church admitted infants to baptism in his time. It is true he advises to *delay* their baptism; not because it was *unlawful*, for he allows of it in cases of necessity? not merely upon the foot of their *infancy*, for he advises also, that *unmarried* persons be kept from this ordinance, until they either marry or are confirmed in continence; but because the *Sponsors* were often brought into a snare; and because, he imagined, sins committed *after baptism* were next to unpardonable. But his advising to delay it, supposes it to have been the practice; for otherwise there would have been no room for the advice. He does not speak of it as an *innovation*, which certainly he would have done, had it *begun* to be practised in his time. His words rather imply the contrary. His speaking of *Sponsors*, who engaged for the education of the infants that were baptized, shews that there had been such a custom. And his asking, Why that innocent age *made such haste* to baptism, supposes that infants had usually been baptized soon after their birth. So that he fully enough witnesses to the *fact*, that it had been the practice of the church to baptize infants. And his advice, to delay their baptism till they were grown up and married, was one of those odd and singular notions, for which this Father was very remarkable.

Origen, who was contemporary with *Tertullian*, expressly declares infant-baptism to have been the constant

constant usage of the church from the Apostles. He says, 'The baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness of sins : But why are infants, *by the usage of the church*, baptized, if there is nothing in them that needs forgiveness?'

Further he says, 'Infants are baptized for the remission of sins ; for none is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one day upon earth. And it is for that reason, because by baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that *infants* are baptized.'

Again he observes, 'The church had from the Apostles an order to give baptism to infants ; for they, to whom the divine mysteries were committed, knew that there was in all persons the natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by water and the Spirit.'

Now as *Origen*, in these passages, argues from infant-baptism to prove original sin, we may conclude, it was an uncontroverted usage of the church ; for otherwise he could not, with propriety, have used it as an argument to establish another point.

Cyprian, who wrote about 150 years after the Apostles, gives a fuller testimony to this fact. In this time a question was started by one *Fidus*, (not whether infants might be baptized, but) whether baptism ought not to be given them on the eighth day, according to the law of circumcision? This question was proposed to a council of 66 Bishops convened at *Carthage*, who unanimously resolved, that the baptism of infants ought not to be deferred to the eighth day, but might be given them at any time before. And a large letter to this purpose,

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containing the reasons of the resolve, was written and designed by *Cyprian*, in the name of the council.

Now in this assembly of Ministers, doubtless there were some 60 or 70 years old, who could remember within less than 100 years of the Apostles. And therefore, if infant-baptism had been a usage lately introduced, *some* or *all* of them must have known it.—And if so, it is very strange that not one of them intimated any scruple about it. Whether infants should be baptized, seems not to have been at all a question, but only whether their baptism needed to be deferred to the 8th day, which, without hesitancy, was determined in the negative.

A little more than 100 years after this time, *Gregory Nazianzen* taught, ‘that infants should be baptized to consecrate them to Christ in their infancy.’ *Ambrose*, ‘that the baptism of infants had been the practice of the Apostles and of the church till that time.’ *Crysfostom*, ‘that baptism had no determinate time, as circumcision had, but one in the beginning of life, or one in the middle of it, or one in old age might receive it.’

But not to multiply citations; I shall add but one more, *Austin*, about 300 years after the Apostles, had a controversy with *Pelagius* about original sin; and to prove it, he frequently urges infant-baptism demanding, Why infants are baptized for the remission of sins, if they have none? *Pelagius* though greatly puzzled with the argument, yet never pretends, that infant-baptism was an unscriptural *innovation*, or a *partial* usage in the church; which, had it been true, a man of his very extensive acquaintance

acquaintance with the world, must have known ; and had he known it, he doubtless would have said it, when he found himself embarrassed with the argument. But far from intimating any such thing, when some charged upon him the denial of infant-baptism, as a consequence of his opinion, he disavows the consequence and complains, that *he had been slanderously represented as denying baptism to infants*. He asks, ‘ Who can be so impious as to hinder infants from being baptized and born again in Christ ?’ And citing those words, *Except one be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, he says, ‘ Who can be so impious as to refuse to an infant, of whatever age, the common redemption of mankind ?’ And many other expressions he uses, which plainly suppose, that infant-baptism had been practised universally, and time out of mind.

And from this time, till the year 1522, (as Dr. Wall, upon a most careful enquiry, assures us) there is not so much as a man to be found, who has spoken against, or even pleaded for the delay of the baptism of infants, except a small number in *France*, in the 12th century, who denied the possibility of their salvation, and consequently their right to baptism. But this sect soon disappeared.

Now if all the first churches were every where established by the Apostles, upon the plan only of adult baptism, and children were every where left unbaptized, how could infant-baptism begin so early, and spread so extensively as it seems to have done ? How could such a speedy and total alteration take place in a matter of such public notice and great importance, and yet no noise be made about it ;

it; no opposition raised against it? Such a thing would be absurd to imagine. The early and universal usage of the church is then an argument of very considerable weight, that infant-baptism was an Apostolic practice.

To invalidate this argument our brethren alledge, that many corruptions were early admitted into the christian church under pretence of *Apostolic* traditions, and prevailed without opposition; such as *Infants Communion, Exorcism, Trine-Immersion, Unc-tion after baptism, &c.* But supposing *these* had prevailed as early and universally, as we find *infant baptism* to have done (which truly was not the case) yet there is this mighty difference. *These* were but circumstantial errors, which did not destroy the being of the church, or nullify men's christianity, and therefore it is no wonder, that we have no account of any warm controversy about them. But *infant baptism*, in the opinion of our brethren, does, so far as it prevails, unchurch the church of Christ: For they look upon those, who have received no other baptism, as being unbaptized; and unfit for christian communion. Now if the first christians had viewed it in this light, would they have sat silent, when they saw it get footing, and prevail? Would not some, alarmed at the dangerous innovation, have born their testimony against it? Would there not have been some churches, which preserved the primitive usage, and renounced communion with such as had so essentially departed from it? The different sects of christians were often inflamed against each other by smaller differences. It is therefore utterly unaccountable, that there should be no dispute, when this supposed *fundamental* innovation

novation was introduced, nor the least remains of any controversy about it, until within these two or three centuries.

There were indeed some great corruptions introduced into the church, which in time considerably prevailed, such as *Image-worship*, *Transubstantiation*, &c. But *these* never prevailed so *universally*, so *early*, nor so *without opposition*, as we have seen *infant baptism* must have done. A great part of the christian church has *always* rejected them and protested against them. Many Synods and Councils have publicly condemned them. And in the times when, and places where they most prevailed, it was by the protection and support of civil and military power; which cannot be pretended in the case of infant baptism.

It is time that we draw to a conclusion. I have only to lay before you a few deductions from what has been offered.

It has, I think, been proved, that *our* baptism is one with that of our *brethren*, and that we have neither changed the baptism instituted by Christ into another *rite*, nor introduced a *new set of subjects*. And therefore,

1. I beg leave seriously to enquire, Whether our brethren have any just occasion to withdraw themselves from our communion? Surely the candid among them will acknowledge, that our opinion is not so wholly without foundation, but that it may consist with an honest and good heart. And can it be for the interest of christianity, which we on both sides profess to regard, that we should renounce fellowship with each other on account of this difference? We are willing they should com-
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mune with us, and yet enjoy the liberty of acting agreeably to their own principles. Though we wish they might think with us, yet we would by no means constrain them to bring their infants to baptism contrary to their consciences. And, I apprehend, few ministers would scruple to administer baptism by immersion to any suitably qualified, who chuse so to receive it. For though they think affusion warranted by scripture, yet they are far from denying the validity of immersion. Since therefore our brethren may enjoy their own principles with us, what occasion can they have to separate from us?

Perhaps some will say, We cannot commune with you, because, in our opinion, you are unbaptized; nor can we receive baptism from your ministers, because *they* have received no other than infant baptism, which is a nullity: And since they have not been regularly baptized themselves, they cannot administer valid baptism to others.

It were to be wished, that persons of such narrow sentiments would realize the consequence. Infant baptism was undoubtedly the universal practice of the christian church for many hundreds of years together. History does not inform us, when it first began to be practised; but we have particular accounts when it was first opposed. And if it be a nullity, there is not, nor can be again, any regular baptism in the world; for there is not the least ground to pretend to a succession of adult baptism. If we trace adult baptisms back, we must come to the time when they were administered by those who were baptized in infancy, and who, upon the principles above mentioned, could

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not administer valid baptism. Our brethren therefore, by nullifying *our* baptism, nullify *their own*; and by unchurching *us*, unchurch *themselves*. Yea, upon these principles, there were no authorized ministers, nor regular churches, nor baptized christians, for many centuries together, nor are there now, nor ever will be again, without a new commission from heaven. How then has Christ fulfilled his promises, that he will be with his ministers always to the end of the world, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church? We may rest assured, that these promises have not been forgotten, and consequently, that baptism did not cease, nor the church fail, when infant baptism became so much the general practice, that a succession of adult baptisms was no where preserved. Our brethren then must allow, that baptism, as administered in our churches, is valid, and consequently, that the above mentioned plea, for declining communion with us, is of no weight.

And indeed many among them, though they think infant baptism, especially when performed by sprinkling, not regular, yet do so far allow the validity of it, that they scruple not to hold communion with us. Some baptist churches in *England* are founded on this catholic plan. The church, of which the late celebrated *Dr. Foster* was minister, received to her communion such as were baptized in infancy, without requiring them to be rebaptized. The famous *Mr. Whiston*, was admitted to the communion of this church, after leaving the church of *England*, without rebaptization, which he never would submit to; for though he pronounced baptism in infancy, and by sprinkling, to be wrong, yet he declared

clared it to be 'so far real baptism, that it *ought not* to be repeated.* Were our brethren *all* (as indeed *many* of them are) of the same generous sentiments, we should hardly need to be known as different sects; to be sure there would be no occasion for dividing communions upon our different opinions.

With those of less generous sentiments, I beg leave seriously to exhort. That you have the same right as we have, to judge what are the divine institutions, and to practice accordingly, none will deny. But to differ in sentiment and practice, is one thing; to renounce communion on account of this difference is another. To justify this step, it is not sufficient to prove, that you *may* be in the right: It is necessary to prove, that we *must* be *fundamentally* in the wrong. You suppose us to be in an error. But is this error, in your opinion, so manifest, and so gross, that none who embrace it can be honest christians?—Can you demonstrate, that the seal of the covenant of grace was *never* appointed for the children of believers; or, if such an appointment was once made, it has since been revoked? that baptism *always* signifies *immersion*, and that this mode was *invariably* used by the apostles? That the age and manner of admission into the church, in use among you, is so essential, that the least deviation nullifies our christianity?—Will you pretend, that there are no real christians in *our* churches? That the word and ordinances administered in them, have never been blessed to men's conversion and salvation? That there was nothing of the power of godliness, in and after the time of reformation? No true religion among our fathers,
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* Clark's Defence, page 34.

and in the churches founded by them ? That there have been no revivals of piety in these churches since they were plantèd ? That God has never ownèd them by providential protections, or by the effusions of his spirit ? Has there never been any real godliness, but what was confinèd to *your* denomination ; and none at all in that long period, when your sect did not exist ? These things, I know, you will not pretend. Nay, I will enquire farther ; do not many of you date your own conversion at a time when you were in sentiment and in communion with our churches ? Did not God bestow this great mercy upon you, while you attended on the ministration of his word and ordinances among us ? This, I know, some of you profess. You believe then, that God has ownèd, and still owns these as *his* churches : and will *you* disown them ? Will *you* reject that which God receives ? If you think it most convenient to worship and commune ordinarily with those of your own sentiments ; yet why need you renounce fellowship with us ? Are you doing God service, when you cause divisions and offences in his churches, contrary to the doctrine of peace and unity, that we have received ? Let us not, my brethren, rend the body of Christ by our divisions ; but with united zeal build up his kingdom in the world.

2. The preceding discourses teach us the unwarrantableness of rebaptization. It is agreed on both sides that baptism is not to be repeated. If then our baptism is valid, a repetition of it is contrary to the will of God. In the baptism of an infant there is the application of water in the name of the Trinity, as well as in the baptism of an adult. If this baptism

be not valid, it is *only* because the subject had not faith, and did not actually consent to the baptismal obligations. Now if the baptism of an infant is a nullity for want of these qualifications, the want of them will equally nullify an adult baptism ; but yet, I presume, none of our brethren will carry the matter to this length. Let us put a case (and such a one as doubtless sometimes happens.) An adult person makes a profession of faith and obedience, and is baptized. It soon appears from the wickedness of his life and the corruptness of his principles, that he had no faith in any rational sense, and never consented to the baptismal obligations, but was influenced only by carnal views. The man afterward comes to repentance, confesses his hypocrisy in this affair, and owns he had no religious views in the whole transaction. He now gives satisfactory proofs, that he is become a real penitent and believer. Ought this person to be rebaptized ? Every one will say, No ; because he has been baptized, and his baptism will save him, as he has *now* the answer of a good conscience toward God. When *Simon* the forcerer, who had been baptized by *Philip*, discovered the vile hypocrisy of his heart, *Peter* directs him to repent, that his sin might be forgiven ; but says nothing of his being baptized again : Whereas he says to the unbaptized *Jews*, *Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins*. But there is just the same reason, why this *hypocrite* should be baptized again upon his repentance, as why the *infant* should ; because he no more had faith before baptism, and no more consented to any religious obligation, when he was baptized, than an infant. If a profession of repentance is all that is

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necessary to our receiving this baptized hypocrite, a profession of faith and obedience, at adult age, is all that is necessary to our receiving one baptized in childhood. So that rebaptization is unwarrantable and sinful even upon the principles of our brethren themselves; and much more upon supposition of infants *right* to baptism, which, I think, has been abundantly proved. Further,

3. If children are the proper subjects of baptism, then it is the indispensable duty of parents to present them to God in this ordinance, and there must be an inexcusable neglect in those parents, who, though convinced of their childrens right to baptism, delay to procure it for them.

Some will say perhaps, 'Though we dispute not their *right* to it, yet it appears to us to be a matter of very little consequence.'

But certainly it is a matter of *great* consequence, that you comply with a divine institution. He that breaks the least command shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

Perhaps you will say, 'We can't suppose the happiness of our children at all depends upon their baptism, since it is a thing out of *their* power.' Be it so: Yet if it be a duty incumbent on you to bring them to baptism, *your* happiness may depend on your compliance with *this* as well as any *other* duty. But how are you sure that *their* welfare no way depends upon it? Their welfare much depends on their being religiously educated—their education will chiefly lie with you—by their baptism you engage to give them a religious education—and if your bringing yourselves under public solemn obligations, will be any motive with you to educate them

them religiously, then their welfare, in some degree, depends on their baptism. You will say, 'You can do your duty as well without such a promise as with it.' With equal reason might you say, you can live a religious life without ever making a profession of religion, as well as if you did. But God has required you to make a profession, because this will be a proper motive and inducement to you to live a religious life; it is a suitable means of strengthening your obligations and keeping them in your remembrance. And your dedicating your children to God in baptism is founded on the same reason. It is a promise which you take on yourselves, and a means of reminding you of your obligations, to educate them religiously. And this will be an argument, which you may use to good advantage in your addresses to them.

With respect to unbaptized infants, we may be assured, God will do them no wrong. But if he has made their baptism a condition of the bestowment of some undeserved favours, who can say, this is unjust? It would be presumption to assert, that all who die unbaptized are lost. God's tender mercies are over all his works. But the *promise* is to believers, and *their* children. And should we suppose, that the baptized infants of believers, have some advantages above other infants in another state, this could not be called absurd: For it is certainly a part of the scheme of God's moral government, that some should be benefited by the piety of others. All intercession is founded in this principle. You doubtless sometimes pray for your infant children. If you see them in danger of death, you pray, not only that their lives may be spared, but

but also that their souls might be saved. But why do you pray for them, if you imagine no good can redound to them from your faith and piety? How often did Christ exercise his healing mercy toward the sick on account of the faith of others? How often did he grant cures to children upon the earnest petitions of their parents? It would then be extremely rash to conclude, your infants cannot be benefited by your dedicating them to God. Those believers, who brought infants to our Saviour, that he should bless them and pray for them, entertained another sentiment. They thought the good of these children, in some measure, depended on *their* bringing them to Christ. And Christ commended their piety, and directed others to do likewise.

Some perhaps will say, 'We believe that infants are subjects of baptism, but we question our own right to give them up to God therein.' But if you question your own right, it must be, because you question whether you have any religion. And can you be contented so?

Whatever the difficulty is, which lies in your way, it should be your immediate concern to remove it. Is it not your intention to live a life of religion? Is it not your desire that your children should grow up before the Lord? Is it not your resolution to bring them up for him? If it is, then say so, by a public dedication of yourselves and your children to God. If it is not, then tremble at the thought of your own impiety and carelessness. If you have no good purposes and desires, you cannot consistently profess any; if you have good desires and purposes, strengthen and confirm them by bringing yourselves under explicit obligations to act agreeably to them. i Finally.

Finally. Let such as have dedicated their children to God, act under a sense of the vows that are upon them.

If your children are removed by an early death, quietly submit to the will of that sovereign Lord, whose property you have acknowledged them to be, and entertain no anxious thoughts about the manner in which he has disposed of them. When you gave them to him in baptism, you professed your faith in his mercy toward them. If you cannot trust him to dispose of them, why did you dedicate them to him? If you can, why are you anxious about them now since he has taken them into his own hands?

If your children live, then bring them up in the nature and admonition of the Lord. If your worldly circumstances make it necessary, that you should commit them to the care of others, see that you put them into families where you have reason to think, they will be religiously educated. If you keep them under your own immediate care, train them up in the way in which they should go; and commend them to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among the Saints.



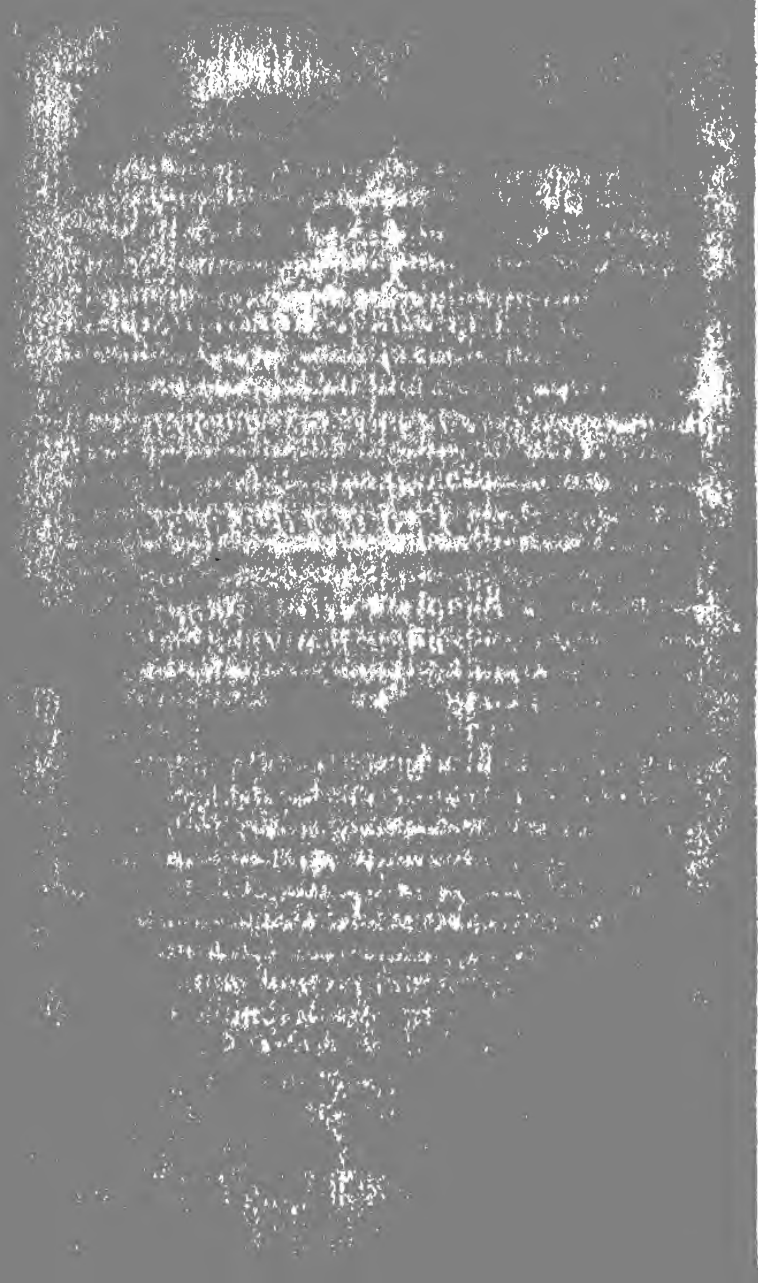
CHRIST'S
WARNING TO THE CHURCHES,
TO BEWARE OF
FALSE PROPHETS,
WHO COME AS
WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING:
AND THE
MARKS BY WHICH THEY ARE KNOWN:
ILLUSTRATED IN
TWO DISCOURSES.

By JOSEPH LATHROP, D. D.
Pastor of the first Church in West-Springfield.

There were false prophets among the people, even
as there shall be false teachers among you—
And many shall follow their pernicious ways.
Apostle Peter.

THE THIRD EDITION,

WITH AN
APPENDIX
AND
OTHER ENLARGEMENTS.





DISCOURSE I.

MATTHEW, vii. 15, 16.

Beware of False Prophets, who come unto you in Sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.

GOD has, in all ages, had a church in the world ; and he will continue it, until the world shall be no more. His church has subsisted in different forms ; but under every form he has appointed, that there should be publick teachers in it, to open the important truths, and inculcate the sacred duties of religion. Under the old testament there were prophets, and under the new testament there were apostles, ordained for this end : And Christ has plainly signified, that the order of religious teachers shall be preserved, until the saints shall be gathered together in one body in heaven.

As in all ages there have been publick teachers of religion, so there have also been false teachers, who have assumed a sacred character, and with corrupt views, have endeavoured to draw away disciples after them. There were false prophets among the Jews : and Christ and his apostles have warned us, that there shall be false teachers among Christians, who shall privily bring in dangerous heresies, and corrupt men from the simplicity of the gospel.

Our

Our Saviour says in the text, *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

But if they come in sheep's clothing, how shall we distinguish them from sheep: Christ adds, *By their fruits ye shall know them.* They may carry on the deception for a time; but their corrupt dispositions will, sooner or latter, betray them. Observe their motions, and you will perceive the ferocity, wildness, and greediness of the wolf, notwithstanding the stolen fleece on their backs.

My brethren, as this is a time when error and wickedness much abound; when new and strange doctrines are taught; and when teachers, of one sort and another, are starting up with pretensions to guide souls in the way to heaven; it concerns you, carefully to distinguish between true teachers and corrupt seducers. That you may the more easily guard against the common danger, I shall lay before you, with great plainness, the marks by which false teachers are to be known. I shall not apply these marks to any sect or denomination; I shall only point them out to you exactly as they lie in the scriptures, and shall leave you to make the application, as you may find occasion.

I. They who refuse to enter into office, in the way which the gospel prescribes, are to be rejected: They have one plain mark of false teachers. As this is the grand mark of distinction, I shall consider it largely.

Our Saviour says, John x. 1. *He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.* Christ is the door; not only the door by which the sheep enter

enter into the fold, to enjoy the shepherd's care, as mentioned ver. 9, but also the door by which the *shepherd* enters to take the charge of the sheep; as here represented. To enter by the door, is to enter by Christ, and in conformity to the order which he has appointed. The qualifications requisite in publick teachers and the manner of induction to the sacred office, are pointed out in various parts of scripture, and very particularly in Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus. It is there required, that they be men furnished with competent knowledge and learning, especially in divine things; not novices—that they be sound in faith; not corrupters of the word of God—that they be holy and blameless in their lives; not chargeable with any vice—that they be men of general good report; not of unknown, much less of infamous character—and that they be tried and approved by the elders of the church; not such as rashly intrude themselves into office.

The apostle says, Heb. v. 4. *No man taketh this honor to himself, but he only has a right to it, who is called of God, as was Aaron, and his sons.* How they were called, we are informed in the 28th chap. of Exodus. They were consecrated to the priesthood by Moses, God's minister, who was commanded "to separate that family from among the children of Israel, and to anoint, sanctify and consecrate them, that they might minister in the priest's office.

Speaking of the call of the Gentiles, Rom. x. 14. the apostle asks, *how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?* There must be a *sending*, a regular *mission*, to authorize them to preach the gospel. That

That the work of public teaching in the church is not *common to every* Christian, who is pleased to assume it; but peculiar to *some*, to those who are *sent*, and *called* thereto in the gospel way, the apostle plainly instructs us in his epistle to the Ephesians, chap. iv. and in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xii. *When Christ ascended on high, he gave gifts to men; and he gave some apostles; some prophets; some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ.* There were only *some* to be teachers: It was not intended that every one, who list- ed, should act in this capacity, under pretence of edifying the church. *God has set some in the church to officiate in this character; first apostles; then prophets; and then teachers.* *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?---* By no means. If all the several parts of the body were one member, where were the body? And if all the members of the church should assume one office, where were the church? All things are to be done decently and in order.

The apostles themselves received their commis- sion immediately from Christ. In the time of his ministry on earth, he gave to the twelve, and after- wards to the seventy disciples, an express command to go and preach the kingdom of God among the Jews. After his resurrection this commission was enlarged. *All power, says he, in heaven and in earth is given to me; go ye therefore and teach all nations.* Matth. xxviii. Though they had now received, yet they were not furnished to *execute* this extensive commission: Therefore Christ adds, *Tarry ye at Je- rusalem, exercising your ministry there, until ye be endued.*

endued from on high—for ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence. Accordingly, about ten days after this, on the day of pentecost, when they were all assembled together (all the hundred and twenty disciples, who had companied together all the time, that Christ went in and out among them; when *these* were assembled together) the gift of tongues was bestowed upon them, as that of miracles had been before: And now they were furnished to preach the gospel among all nations. As these were ordained immediately by Christ, so they were authorized to ordain others.

Paul was an apostle, not by man, but by Jesus Christ; yet, after he received the gospel, he presumed not to preach, until Ananias, who is supposed to have been one of the seventy disciples, came to him, & by an express command from Christ, laid his hands on him, & told him, 'He was a chosen vessel to bear Christ's name among the Gentiles, as well as Jews. The miracle which Ananias performed, in restoring Paul to his sight, was an evidence of the authenticity of his commission. Acts ix. 15, 16, 17, 18--& chap: xxii. 12, 13, 14, 15.

Afterward, when Paul and Barnabas were about to carry the gospel to the Gentiles, they were, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, separated to that work by the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch, 'who fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, and sent them away.' Acts xiii. 1, 2, 3. And these apostles, as they went through various cities of the Gentiles, preaching the gospel, and confirming believers, 'ordained them elders in every church, commending them, by fasting and prayer, to the grace of God. Acts xiv. 23.

These elders, who were ordained by the apostles and first ministers, were at the same time authorized

to transmit the office to others. Timothy was ordained by the 'laying on of the hands of the presbytery, in the presence of many witnesses:'. And the things, which he had received, the same he was ordered to commit to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also:'. And he is solemnly cautioned to 'lay hands suddenly on no man.' 1 epistle, v. 22—2 epistle, ii. 2. And Paul says to Titus, who was a minister in the island of Crete, 'For this purpose have I left thee in Crete, that thou mightest ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.' Chap. i. 5. But why should Titus be left there to ordain elders, if the eldership might be assumed at pleasure, or be conveyed by private brethren? There is not in all the gospel history, a single example of ordination, or recommendation to the work of the ministry, by any other than the bishops and elders of churches; and to such only are given the directions relating to this matter.

We find also, that in case a complaint arises against a minister, it is to be referred, not to private brethren, but to elders or pastors of churches. To Timothy as a bishop is this instruction given by Paul. *Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.* 1 epistle, v. 19. He is cautioned not to ordain any to the ministry, but such as could bring a good report; for when one desires an office, it is incumbent on him to exhibit evidence of his qualifications. But against one *already in office* a bare report is not to be received; there must be an accusation supported by two or three witnesses, to eject him from office, or bring him under censure.

Every church has a right to *choose* her own minister;

ister ; but she cannot *make* a minister. He must be separated to the work by the elders of the churches. When it was judged necessary, that a certain number of meet persons should be appointed to preside over the distribution of the church stock, and the ministration to the poor, the twelve apostles referred the *choice* to the multitude of the disciples ; but the *appointment* and *ordination* they reserved to themselves. ‘ They called the multitude of the disciples, and said, Look ye out seven men of honest report, whom *we* may appoint over this business : And they chose seven, and set them before the apostles, who fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them.’ Acts vi.

A Christian church is compared to a household, and to a city, in respect of the order and government, the peace and unity, that ought to be preserved in it. But if every man might assume the office of a teacher at pleasure, where would be the order and unity ? There would be the same confusion and distraction, as in a state where every one claimed a right to exercise the powers of magistracy.

You see then, that they, who take on them the office of teachers in the church, without submitting their call and qualifications to that mode of trial, which the gospel has instituted, are to be considered as intruders, and rejected as impostors ; for they come not in by the door. Their effected contempt of regular approbation betrays a consciousness of their want of the qualifications which the gospel requires, and indicates such arrogance, pride and presumption, as ought never to appear in one, who professes to have learnt the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus.

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The apostle Peter, 1 epistle, ii. 1. speaks of some false teachers, who *privily* bring into the Church damnable heresies, and seduce many to follow their pernicious ways. Jude, speaking of the same persons, describes them *as creeping in unawares*; in a secret subtle manner. This *coming in privily*, and *creeping in unawares*, answers to our Saviour's description of them, as not entering into the sheepfold *by the door*, but climbing up *some other way*. It especially intends their assuming the office of teachers, without the approbation of those, whom the gospel has constituted judges of their qualifications. The apostle Jude illustrates their character, by comparing them to the ancient *Corahites*. *They have perished in the gainsaying of Corah*. The story alluded to is in the 16th chap. of Numbers. Corah and his companions took upon them to offer incense, and exercise the functions of the priesthood. They murmured against the family of Aaron, which had been consecrated to this holy service. They said, 'Ye take too much upon you seeing all the congregation are holy, and the Lord is among them: Wherefore list ye up yourselves above the congregation?' They called 'the standing order' of ministers a tyranny, a usurpation of rights common to all the Lord's people: They pretended, that every man, who pleased, might officiate in the priesthood. Moses says, 'God hath brought you near to him to do the service of the tabernacle, and do you seek the priesthood also? Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.' How their presumption issued, you well remember. Now the apostle says, these false teachers, who crept into the church unawares, were guilty of the gainsaying of Corah. They had assumed

fumed the sacred office like him, uncalled and unauthorized ; were guilty of his presumption, and exposed to his condemnation.

It will perhaps be said, ' In the apostles' time, there were some, who had an immediate call from the Spirit to preach the gospel ; and this may be the case still ; and if a man is moved by the Spirit, he must obey.'

But if the Spirit moves a man to preach the gospel, it will undoubtedly move him to act conformably to the rules of the gospel, and to seek an introduction to the work, in the manner which the gospel prescribes. The divine Spirit never dictates to the heart a line of conduct, which it has forbidden in the word. They, who despise and neglect the gospel-method of introduction to the sacred office, under pretence of some inward motion, are not influenced by the *Holy Spirit*, but instigated by a spirit of a very different character.

There is no instance, in the new testament, of any man's assuming the office of a preacher *merely* on an *internal* call of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost commanded Ananias to go and declare to Paul, that he was chosen to preach Christ's name : And the Holy Ghost said to the prophets and teachers at Antioch, Separate me Barnabas and Paul to the work, to which I have called them. But we find not, that Paul or Barnabas, or any other of the primitive preachers, ran to the work before they were sent, under pretence of an internal call of the Spirit, which no body knew but themselves. In the present day the tables are turned. It is the *preacher* now who is directed by the Spirit ; not they who are to set him apart to the work. If it

could be supposed, that one might have such a secret command from the Spirit, this is only evidence to *himself*: It will not warrant *others* to attend on him; it can therefore answer no purpose. What endless confusion would follow from admitting such pretences! Any man, who is dishonest enough, may pretend such a call; and who shall contradict him? What order can there be in the church? The man may be ignorant, immoral or heretical.—But who shall judge, censure and silence him? He still pleads a call from the Spirit, and he will be judged by no man.

If one pretends such a special divine direction, as his warrant to preach, let him manifest it by miracles; as the apostles manifested their commission. Miracles have ceased, and so have all immediate revelations; and the man, who now pretends to them, is a designing impostor, or deluded enthusiast.

If such arrogant pretensions should be accompanied, as they usually are, with an open contempt of human learning, and of that *study* and *attendance on reading*, which Paul enjoins on the minister, we may justly suspect, they are held up as a substitute for real qualifications, a cover for ignorance, and an excuse for laziness.

In the apostles' time, there were instances of the Spirit's designating the persons to be ordained to the ministry; but it is evident, that this manner of designation was not to be continued in the church, because the Holy Ghost has taken care to furnish the church with standing rules for her conduct in this matter. Timothy, who was ordained by the elders of the church, is commanded to commit the same office which he had received, to faithful men,
who

who should be able to teach others. But how shall Timothy know, who are these able, and faithful men? Shall he ordain every man, who says, The Spirit moves him to preach? Or will the Spirit immediately point out to Timothy the man who is to be ordained? No: He must inquire into the qualifications of those who offer themselves to the work. Paul says to him, 'If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, sober, of good behaviour, apt to teach, not given to wine, not a novice; moreover he must have a good report of them that are without.' Surely, if Paul had supposed, that the Spirit would immediately and supernaturally direct in this matter, he would not have instructed Timothy so particularly, what qualifications he must find in those, whom he ordained to be teachers in the church.

The instructions given to Titus are the same. 'For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou mayest ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any man be blameless, sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word, and able by sound doctrine to exhort, and to convince gainfayers.'

Since the Spirit of God has given in the gospel, sufficient directions concerning this matter; to these let us attend, and look for no other.

It has been urged in favour of private brethren's teaching in the church, 'That "the apostle says to the Corinthians, *Ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and be comforted.*" 1 epistle, xiv. 31.

But could he intend, that all the *Christians* in Corinth might *prophesy* or *preach*? By no means;
for

for then we must suppose that even *women* were to commence preachers, if they pleased, contrary to his express instructions both here, and in his first epistle to Timothy. By *all* he means *all the prophets*, as will be evident, if you take the whole sentence in its connexion. ‘Let the *prophets* speak, two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace; for ye may all prophesy one by one.’ In the Corinthian church there were many endued with spiritual gifts; who, being ambitious to display their gifts, used to speak several at once, to the confusion of one another, and of the whole assembly. To correct this disorder, the apostle says, ‘If any man speak, let it be by two; or, at the most, by three,’ i. e. Let not more than two or three speak in the same meeting; and let not these speak all at once, ‘but by course,’ one after another: ‘Let the *prophets* speak two or three, in succession, and let the other judge.’ ‘And if, while one is prophesying, any thing be revealed to another,’ i. e. another *prophet*, ‘let the first hold his peace.’ Let the first finish his discourse, and cease from speaking, before the other begins. ‘For ye may all prophesy one by one. If ye will observe order in your assemblies, all the *prophets* may have opportunity to speak; ye need not interrupt one another. And do not pretend, that ye are so overpowered by the divine influence, that you cannot refrain, but must immediately give vent to the fervid ebullitions of grace; ‘for the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.’ *Prophets* were an order of
public

public teachers in the primitive church: *These* only are the persons, who the apostle says, may all prophesy. The words therefore, far from allowing, plainly forbid private Christians to start up and teach in religious assemblies.

I will mention another passage, which has been sometimes perverted to justify private brethren in assuming the office of teachers. *At the time of Stephen's martyrdom, there was great persecution against the church, which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad through the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.—And they, that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word.* Acts 8.

But are we to suppose that the *all*, who were scattered abroad, were all the *members* of the Church in Jerusalem, and that *all these* went every where preaching? This would be absurd; for then we must suppose the *women* turned preachers. The church at Jerusalem was, at this time, very large. We read of three thousands at one time, and five thousands at another, converted to the Christian faith; besides other considerable accessions. A great proportion of these were in and about Jerusalem. That all the believers in this city should go forth to preach, is not supposable: So many were not needed, nor could so many be employed, in the regions of Judea and Samaria, and the other places whither they went; for they preached to Jews only. And if the fire of persecution was so hot that no professed believer could live in Jerusalem, why were not the apostles scattered among the rest?

It is certain that the church in Jerusalem was not dispersed; for still there were in Judea *brethren* and *apostles*;

apostles; and in the city there were *devout men*, who carried Stephen to his burial; and *disciples* to whom Paul essayed to join himself, after he came from Damascus. Yea, we are expressly told, that when they, who, by this persecution, were scattered abroad, had gone as far as Phenice, Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word with success; tidings of these things came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem. Acts viii. 2—ix. 26—xi. 1, 19, 22.

Since there were still *brethren* with the *apostles*, and since we still find in Jerusalem *devout men*, *disciples* and a *church*; *the all*, who were scattered abroad, cannot be all the *Christians* or *believers* in the city.

Who then were *these all*? Doubtless they were *the hundred and twenty disciples*, who had companied together, while Christ went in and out among them; and on whom the Holy Ghost had lately fallen. *These* are mentioned in the first and second chapters of the Acts, and are, once and again, called *the all*. *These* were assembled together, when a successor to Judas was elected. They were *all* together in one place on the day of pentecost. On *these* the Holy Ghost was shed forth, and cloven tongues, like as of fire, sat on *each of them*. They were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost and spake with tongues.

Grotius, Lightfoot, and Whitby, say, that '*they all*, who were now filled with the Holy Ghost, were all the hundred and twenty.' This appears to have been a received opinion in the ancient church. Jerom, Chrysostom and Oecumenius, observe, that '*the Holy Ghost* fell on the hundred and twenty to complete the prophecy of Joel.' Whitby says,
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‘ It was not the whole church, or body of the laity, that was scattered abroad, but the hundred and eight, who were full of the Holy Ghost ; the persecution aiming chiefly at those, who were such as Stephen was.——’

These were now plainly authorized to preach the gospel, having, in a publick manner, received this supernatural gift, and being, according to Christ’s promise, endued with power from on high ; and therefore, when they were scattered from Jerusalem, they went every where preaching the word.

But whoever these preachers are supposed to be, one thing is undeniable ; they were endued with miraculous gifts and powers, which were the publick seal of their divine commission. For it is expressly said, Acts xi. 21, ‘ The *Hand* of the Lord was with them.’ This phrase is, more than once, used by Luke for the supernatural and miraculous gifts of the Spirit. When Peter and John and their company prayed, that God would *stretch out his Hand to heal* and to enable them to *do signs and wonders in Christ’s name* ; they in answer to their prayer, *were filled with the Holy Ghost*. Acts iv. 30, 31. These men went forth to preach with a publick warrant from heaven. Their example, therefore, will by no means justify private Christians, who have no such warrant, in going every where to preach the word. If any, despising the ordinary mission appointed by God, plead an extraordinary commission to preach every where, let them shew the extraordinary evidences of this commission by miraculous gifts and assistances. God never sends men to do his work, without some testimony

timony sufficient to justify others in receiving them.*

It must, by this time be manifest to you, that no man can claim a right to officiate in the character of a minister or teacher in the church, until he has been approbated and recommended to the work by the elders of churches.

I shall now shew, that whenever ministers or preachers travel into parts, in which they are not known, they ought to carry with them competent credentials; and that no man has a right to act, and Christians have no right to receive a man, in this

* It has been asked, 'What evidence we have, that Apollos, before he was received in the character of a Christian preacher, had been approved by the elders of churches.' It is sufficient to answer, We have evidence from the rule and practice of the apostles already illustrated.

We are not to expect a particular account of every ordination, any more than of every baptism, in the church: and in neither case can the silence of scripture, in certain instances, be urged as an argument against an established usage.

There is no evidence that Apollos acted as a Christian preacher in the church, much less, that he was acknowledged in this character, before he received regular approbation. When he first came to Ephesus, Acts xviii. he knew the way of the Lord, only as far as John's baptism, or doctrine, had led him. He knew that the kingdom of heaven, or the time of the Messiah's appearance, was now come. But that Jesus of Nazareth was this Messiah, had risen from the dead, and shed down the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, he had not been instructed. He first began to speak in the Jewish synagogue, probably, as many others did, by invitation or permission of the ruler of the synagogue. He spake not as a Christian preacher, but rather as a learned and pious Jew, who was looking for redemption in Israel. For it is expressly remarked, that *he knew only the baptism of John*. Aquila, who had been instructed by Paul, and whom Paul left at Ephesus, when he went from thence, and whom some suppose to have been ordained a preacher by this apostle, perceiving that Apollos knew only the doctrine of John, 'took him, and expounded to him the way of the Lord more perfectly. And accordingly we find, that when Apollos went to Achaia, 'he helped the

believers,

this sacred character, unless he exhibits sufficient testimony of his being vested with it. This is a just conclusion from the position already proved; and is farther evident from the uniform practice in the apostles' times.

Paul, after he had preached Christ for some time in Damascus, went to Jerusalem, and essayed to join himself to the disciples there: But they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. Acts ix. So cautious were they not to receive one, who had not given them sufficient evidence of the truth of his pretensions. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, the proper judges in cases of this nature, and declared to them, how Paul had seen Christ in the way, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Christ; and on this testimony of Barnabas, who was himself a minister of Christ, they received him; and he was with them, coming

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 believers. and mightily convinced the Jews, shewing from the scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ.' Before he went into Achaia, 'the brethren' in Ephesus 'wrote to the disciples, exhorting them to receive him.' As there were now many believers, so doubtless there were also elders or ministers in Ephesus. We find, not long after this, Acts xx. that there was a number of elders in that city, who had the oversight of the church there; that they had been there for some time, and had been acquainted with Pauls ministry, 'from the first day that he went into Asia.' It is certain then that there were elders in Ephesus, as early as the time when Apollos was there. These probably were the brethren, or at least among the brethren, who recommended him to the disciples in Achaia. For *brethren* is a term often used for *elders* of the church. It is by no means supposable that Apollos should be known to none but private Christians. So learned and eloquent a man, who had read and spoken openly in the synagogue, and been instructed by Aquila, would certainly become acquainted with the elders. If he was known to them, doubtless they concurred in this recommendation; and if they recommended him, they had previously approved him in the character in which he went to Achaia.

in and going out at Jerusalem. You will observe, he associated with the *apostles*. He did not shun them: He submitted to be examined and judged by them; and being accepted, he conformed and co-operated with them. How differently he conducted from impostors and deceivers, who choose to avoid the company of the regular ministers of Christ!

In the apostolick times, the preachers of the gospel, when they travelled from place to place, carried with them written credentials. Paul says, 2 Cor. iii. *Need we, as some others, letters of commendation from you, or epistles of commendation to you? Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men.* His words import, that *others*, that ministers in general, when they travelled beyond the circle of their acquaintance, had occasion for letters of commendation, although he himself was, by this time, known so universally in the churches, and especially in Corinth, that he needed no such letters.

Judas and Silas are very particularly recommended to the church in Antioch by the apostles, elders, and church in Jerusalem. Acts xv. 25. They are called 'chosen men; men who had hazarded their lives for the name of Christ,' and whose information might be received with full credit. 'And they, *being prophets also themselves*, exhorted the brethren with many words.' Verse 32.

When Timothy went from Philippi to Corinth, to carry Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul, in the epistle which he sent by him, recommends him as a minister, in these words; chap. xvi. If Timothy come, see that he may be among you without fear; for he worketh the work of God,
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as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him.' He recommends him also to the Thessalonians. 1 epistle, iii. 2. 'We have sent Timotheus our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ to establish you.—'

When Paul was at Rome, he wrote a letter to the Ephesian Christians, and sent it by the hand of Tychicus; and, that they might receive Tychicus without distrust, Paul thus recommends him; 'That ye may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things, whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose.'

Chap. vi. In like manner he recommends him to the Colossians in his letter to them. 'All my state shall Tychicus declare, who is a beloved brother, faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord. Chap. iv.

He commends Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippians. Chap. ii. 'I trust to send Timotheus shortly unto you——Ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he had served with me in the gospel——And I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and companion in labour and fellow-foldier—I send him—receive him in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation.'

Paul tells the Colossians, chap. iv. 10, that 'concerning Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, they had already received commandment; and if he came to them, they were to receive him.'

When the eloquent, learned, and fervent Apollos, who had spoken boldly at Ephesus, and taught diligently the way of the Lord, was disposed to pass
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into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him. Acts xviii.

John, in his third epistle, recommends Demetrius, as one who had a good report of all men, and of the truth itself? and as one, of whom he could himself bear testimony with great confidence.

Peter, in his first epistle, which he wrote to the Jewish Christians, dispersed through the provinces of Asia, fails not to make honourable mention of Sylvanus, who carried the epistle to them. 'By Sylvanus, a faithful brother, have I written.'

Yea, we find, not only ministers, but private Christians, recommended to the fellowship of saints. Paul commends Onesimus to the Colossians, as a faithful and beloved brother; and Phebe to the Romans, as a member of the church in Cenchrea, and exhorts them to receive her.

But I have already dwelt too long on this argument. I am sure, it must by this time, be exceedingly plain to you all, that we ought not only to reject those, who without regular approbation, have assumed the office of teachers in the church; but cautiously to avoid *strangers*, who, while they pretend to be ministers, exhibit no proper credentials of their ministerial, or even Christian character, and of their regular standing in the church of Christ. The church in Thyatira is severely reprov'd by Christ himself, 'because she suffered those to teach, who called themselves prophets;' but, that they were such, gave no better evidence, than their own word. On the other hand, the church in Ephesus is commended, because she could not bear them who were evil; and tried them who said they were apostles, but were not, and found them liars. Revelations ii. 2, 20.

From

From the preceding observations it appears, that in the primitive church there were two sorts of ministers; *extraordinary*, as apostles, prophets and evangelists; and *ordinary*, as pastors and teachers. The *former* who were employed in spreading the gospel and planting churches in the world, were endued with miraculous powers, by which they were enabled, as well to authenticate, as to execute, their extraordinary commission. This sort of ministers, and this kind of evidence were to continue, only so long as the state of the church required them. When the canon of revelation should be completed, 'then prophecies were to fail, tongues were to cease, and knowledge,' as an immediate, supernatural gift, 'was to vanish away. 1 Cor. 13, 8.

The *latter*, or *ordinary* ministers, were stated pastors, who laboured in word and doctrine, for the edification of the churches, over which they were made overseers. These appear not to have generally possessed miraculous powers. They were to prove their ministerial authority by ordinary evidence; as by a solemn separation to their work before many witnesses; and, when occasion required, by a recommendation from known ministers or churches. This order of religious teachers is to continue in the church to the end of the world. Eph. iv. 11, 13.

All ministers must now appear in one or other of these characters. If they come as ordinary teachers, they are to exhibit the ordinary evidence of having been regularly approbated to their work, and of their good standing in the church. If they come as extraordinary ministers, pretending to be supernaturally called to, and endued for their work,

and hence claiming an authority to go every where preaching the word, let them produce the great, divine seal of their high commission by incontestible miracles. Otherwise we are not to receive them, nor bid them, God speed.

It may be asked, 'What if a minister regularly ordained, should afterwards become grossly heretical, negligent or immoral? Is he not to be called a *false teacher*?—Rather perhaps he is to be called a corrupt, wicked, or slothful servant. His guilt is not a disorderly intrusion into office, but a criminal perversion of, and unfaithfulness in his office. He is not, however, by any means to be tolerated in his wickedness; but the measures prescribed in the gospel are to be applied for his amendment. In case of contumacy, or incorrigibleness, he is to be rejected by a publick sentence of the elders of churches. Until trial and conviction he is in regular standing for no man is to be condemned without trial. If in the introduction of ministers gospel order is observed, as it generally is in our standing churches, there is little danger, that one grossly vicious, or essentially erroneous, will long be retained in office, because he will be subject to trial and censure. But if every man may, at pleasure, assume the ministerial office, and run whither he lists; and people will countenance the assumption, by attending his ministrations, wherever he goes, there can be no security. For who shall displace from office the man who claims an independent right to assume and retain it? He will submit to no judicature; he will spurn every admonition and censure; discarded in one place, he will carry his impositions to another; and none knows where the mischief will end.

end. Those Christians, who imprudently follow and encourage vagrant, unknown, unrecommended teachers, do their utmost to subvert the discipline of the churches, and to break down the barriers which the gospel has placed against the irruption of ignorance, error and vice. *Christ's sheep will not follow a stranger; they will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.*



DISCOURSE II.

I PROCEED now to point out to you some other marks of false teachers. On these I shall not have occasion greatly to enlarge.

II. Our Saviour tells us, False prophets come *in sheep's clothing*, but inwardly they are *ravens wolves*. Ye shall know them by their fruits.'

They will make great *professions*, and perhaps, for a while, exhibit some plausible *appearance* of humility, peaceableness, meekness, and indifference to the world. They will declare, that they have no party designs, sinister views, or selfish aims; that they are only solicitous to promote your spiritual & eternal interest; while their real intention is to divide, scatter & devour you. You may possibly be deceived at first by their fair pretensions, & be carried away by their dissimulation. But observe them carefully, & you will soon be undeceived. Suppose, they should meet with opposition, or provocation, or be disappointed

disappointed in their views ; then see whether they retain the *lamb-like* gentleness of which they boasted. No : You may now begin to discern the wolf : Now they betray their pride, passion and resentment : Now they break you into parties, that they may catch some of you. They may appear modest and diffident at first ; but suppose, they should find their influence increased by the number of their adherents and followers ; then see whether they are so moderate in their views ; whether they are content with small things ? No : They will leap into one fold and another for new prey. A good shepherd attends to his own proper charge : The wolf is a rapacious, prowling animal : Not satisfied with taking out of one flock, he roams from flock to flock, and can never have enough.

III. False teachers bring in dangerous heresies privily, unawares, and with cunning craftiness. Eph. iv. 14. 2 Peter, ii. 1. Jude iv.

It is not every erroneous doctrine that marks one to be an impostor. In this imperfect state an entire uniformity of sentiment is not to be expected. In those differences of opinion which affect not the essence of religion, candour and forbearance will take place among the virtuous and discerning. Errors, which mar the substance, and defeat the design of the gospel, ought to awaken the concern, and warm the zeal of a Christian. To draw with precision the line, and mark with exactness the boundaries between these different kinds of errors, will undoubtedly be a matter of difficulty. Though the extremes may be glaring, yet where the shades mingle, it is a nice eye that can discriminate. But whatever may be the errors taught, craft & artifice

in teaching them are always to be condemned.— The man who assumes the character of a *Christian* teacher, will not openly avow doctrines directly and palpably subversive of the gospel; for among Christians, these doctrines, in their naked and undisguised form, will not be received. The sacred writers, therefore, make a subtil and insidious *manner* of propagating errors, no less than the errors themselves, a mark of impostors. Of the artifice with which they proceed the gospel has given us warning. They usually begin with smaller errors, and gradually advance to greater. They open not themselves fully at once, but with caution and reserve. They will not alarm you by calling in question the grand principles and doctrines of religion: They rather choose to lead you on gently, step by step, from one error to another. The apostle tells Timothy, ‘ Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.’ In this respect he compares them to the first deceiver. 2 Cor. x. Speaking of false apostles, he says, ‘ They are deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ, and into ministers of righteousness, even as Satan himself was transformed into an angel of light.’ He expresseth his concern for the Corinthians, ‘ Lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity, that is in Christ.’ The serpent beguiled Eve, not by bold and direct temptations, but by sly and artful enticements. He first enquires, whether God had forbidden the use of *every* tree. When he was told, that there was a grant of *all* the trees except *one*, which was guarded with a threatening of death

death ; he replies, ‘ Ye shall not *surely* die.’ There is not that danger, which you apprehend. He next intimates some peculiar advantage in eating of this particular tree. ‘ Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.’ Probably he insinuates, that he was an angel of light sent from heaven to take off the restraint. Thus, by degrees seduced, the woman cast a longing eye on the fruit : The sight inflamed her desire : This, concurring with his suggestions, prevailed on her to take and eat.

In like manner the ministers of Satan are cautious not to startle men at first by too bold suggestions. They will affect, in most points, to conform to the ministers of righteousness ; to think as they think, or not greatly to differ from them ; and only to serve the same important interest, which *they* are serving. They will suit themselves to all companies ; and, as the apostle says, ‘ their word will be yea, and nay ;’ one thing or another, just according to the humours and notions of the people they converse with ; until, they imagine, they have gained their confidence, and seduced them so far, that it is impossible to renew them again to repentance : Then they will venture more boldly to discover their sentiments and open their designs.

IV. Unruly and vain talkers and deceivers are described as privately tampering with people of less knowledge and discernment, because these are more easily deluded.

They choose not, in the first instance, to practise on those who are of full age, and who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. They shun such, lest their de-
signs

signs should be discovered, and their errors exposed. They rather attempt to seduce the young, the weak, the wavering, the discontented; that, having gained these, they may more easily make impressions on the minds of those who are connected with them. The old serpent first applied to Eve, whom having seduced, he by her influence drew the man into disobedience. The same artifice is practiced still. Corrupt teachers, we are told, ‘beguile *unstable* souls;’ and ‘creep into houses and lead captive *filly women*, laden with sins, and led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth;’ thus ‘they subvert *whole houses*, teaching things, which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.’ In this sense they are said ‘to follow the way, and to hold the doctrine of Balaam,’ who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel by seducing them to marry the daughters of Moab, that by this idolatrous connexion, they might be enticed to eat things sacrificed to idols. 2 Peter, 2, 14, 15.—2 Tim. iii. 6.—Titus, i. 11.—and Rev. ii. 14, compared with Numb. xxv. 1, 2.

V. Another mark of false teachers is an implacable malignity against the standing, regular ministers of the gospel.

Read the epistle of Jude, and Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians and Galatians, and you will see this spirit to be characteristick of them. They not only censure some unworthy characters, but declaim against the whole order, and spare no pains to infuse into people’s minds prejudices against all that belong to it. Jude says of those ungodly men, who, in his day, had crept in unawares; ‘They speak
evil

evil of things, which they know not'—slander ministers and churches, with which they are utterly unacquainted. 'They despise dominion and speak evil of dignities.' The false apostles reproached Paul, not only as a man of diminutive figure and contemptible speech, but as one that was carnal, walked after the flesh, and preached only for wages. But they commended themselves, as making the gospel free, and as preaching only from love to souls, without a desire of worldly gain. And what was their aim?—The apostle tells us; and he was well acquainted with them. 'They zealously affect you, but not well: Yea, they would exclude *us*, that ye may affect *them*.' Gal. iv. 17. marg. Their hypocritical pretensions of making the gospel without charge, and their perpetual clamour against Paul for taking wages of the churches, were the reasons, why he so often and so largely stated and proved the right of ministers to live by the gospel, and the obligation of Christians to support them. But while he claimed a right to a liberal maintenance, he tells the Corinthians, he had waved this right among them, taking *wages* of other churches to do them service.' And this he did, on charitable and prudential reasons, 'that he might cut off occasion from the false apostles, who desired occasion, that wherein they gloried, they might be found even as he.' They *gloried*, as false teachers most commonly do, in making the gospel free: But Paul says, They are 'deceitful workers.' He acted openly and without disguise. He asserted his *right*, but remitted the *exercise* of it in Corinth. They were vain talkers, and deceivers; they denied the right, and yet exercised it in a surreptitious manner.

ner. While they gloried in preaching freely, they actually took of the Corinthians so extravagantly, that they even *'devoured them, and brought them into bondage.'* And yet there were some in Corinth, who, while they joined in the clamour against Paul as an hireling, would patiently bear any thing, and every thing from these deceivers. *'Have I committed an offence, says he, because I preached to you the gospel of God freely?'*—*'But ye suffer fools gladly; for ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage; if a man devour you; if a man take of you; if a man exalt himself; if a man smite you on the face.'* But how did these deceitful workers carry on their design of taking wages, while they pretended to have none? It seems they employed accomplices to take, or rather extort gifts for them: And then, to cover the artifice more deeply, and prevent a suspicion of their privity, they accused Paul of this duplicity. But he utterly disavows it, and appeals to the Corinthians for the falsity of the charge. He says, *'I was not burdensome to you;—for I seek not yours, but you—very gladly will I spend and be spent for you.'*—*'But be it so; I did not burden you, yet being crafty, I caught you with guile.'* i. e. These deceitful workers, conscious of their own artifice, will say, *'Though I did not burden you myself, yet I craftily employed others to take of you for me.'* He despises the insinuation. *'Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent to you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? Walked we not in the same spirit, and in the same steps?'* Paul *'renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking*

in craftiness.—’ But these deceivers, ‘ through covetousness, with feigned words made merchandise of their hearers.’ 1 Cor. ix. and 2 Cor. x. and seq. and 2 Peter, ii. 3.

This leads me to notice another mark which the apostle mentions.

VI. This sort of teachers are guided by no *line*, and confined to no *measure* ; but run from place to place, enter into other men’s labours, and build on other men’s foundation.

Wherever the apostles came preaching the gospel, they exhibited full evidence, as of their general commission, so of their particular warrant to preach in that place. When any sought a proof of Christ speaking in Paul, he was able to answer, ‘ The signs of an apostle have been wrought among you—and we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.’ He says to the Corinthians, ‘ We dare not make ourselves of the number, nor compare ourselves with some who commend themselves—We dare not imitate the arrogance and ostentation of your false apostles. ‘ We will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond, nor boast of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labours : But we have hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you, according to our rule, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you ; and not to boast, in another man’s line, of things made ready to our hand.’ 2 Cor. x. 12---16. How different was Paul’s conduct from that of these false apostles ? They could
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shew no commission to preach to the Corinthians, nor indeed any where else : But he could manifest his apostolick commission, and his particular warrant to preach in Corinth ; for when he was ordained to preach to the Gentiles, a measure was assigned him which included Achaia. They moved by no line, by no rule, but leaped from one church to another : He went on orderly in preaching the gospel and planting churches among the Gentiles, from Judea through all the interjacent provinces, until he came to Corinth ; and he hoped still to proceed farther according to his line. They only came and perverted those churches, where the faith had been already preached, and so could only boast of things made ready to their hands ; instead of founding churches, they only formed sects out of churches already founded : He preached the gospel where no other apostle had before been employed ; and erected churches, not as separate parties, but only as provinces of Christ's general kingdom, that there might be no schism in the body. He speaks to the same purpose in his letter to the Romans. 'I will not dare to speak of,' or assume to myself, 'any of those things, which Christ hath not wrought by me.'—'Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ is named, lest I should build on another man's foundation. Rom. xv. 18, 20.

Ministers, you see, are to have their respective lines and measures, within which they must move. They are not to be 'clouds without water, driven about with wind' in every direction : but clouds fraught with heavenly treasures, and advancing in a steady course over the thirsty ground. 'Their doctrine

doctrine should drop as the rain, and distil as the dew, as the small rain, on the tender herb, and the showers on the grass.' They are not to be 'wandering stars,' but stars confined in their appointed orbits. They are not to cross each other's lines, and interfere in their motions; but, like the heavenly system, to run, each in his proper circuit, around the common centre. They are to contribute, each in his sphere, to the general order and harmony. They are to be fellow-workers to the kingdom of God. Paul charges the elders of the church, that they take heed to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers, to feed the church of God.' Acts xx. 18. The caution given by Peter, 'Be ye not busy-bodies in other men's matters,' is peculiarly applicable to, and perhaps especially intended for ministers, whom he particularly addresses in the precedent and subsequent verses. The original phrase literally imports, *Let none of you—act as a bishop in another's province.* 1 Peter, iv. 15. It is a plain mark of a false teacher, to enter upon, and pull down other men's works, that he may build on their ground: To stretch himself beyond his measure; or to move without any line of direction. In this respect Peter and Jude compare the corrupt teachers, in that day, to clouds hurled about with a tempest—to raging waves of the sea—to floating meteors, of strong, but transient glare, to which is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*

VII.

* The prophet Isaiah, chap. xxx, verse 20, says, "*Thine eyes shall see thy teachers.*" This is a blessing peculiarly promised to the church of Israel, after she had surmounted her greatest trials; and therefore most properly belongs to the spiritual Israel, or gospel-church; whose teachers should not dwell, like the Levites, in separate

VII. They are considered by the apostles as false teachers, who cause divisions and offences in the churches of Christ.

The gospel every where inculcates peace and unity among Christians ; and represents separations and

arate cities, but in the midst of her, so that she might see them, be conversant with them, know their ability and fidelity in their office, have their example before her eyes, and enjoy their presence and counsels in all her troubles. Such is evidently the design of the gospel-ministry. Accordingly, except a few evangelists, who were extraordinary officers, and who had a work in some respects, peculiar to themselves, the Christian churches, in the first ages, had their *known* officers, their *settled* bishops, who resided, each in the church of which he was made overseer. Such a man was elder or bishop, of this church, and such a man of another. Every congregation had its own pastor ; every large city had its body of pastors. Christians enjoyed a personal acquaintance with their minister ; fully knew his faith, doctrine, manner of life, and had access to him for advice on all occasions ; and he, standing in a special and endearing relation to them, naturally cared for their state. The evidence of this appears in all parts of the acts and the epistles. The church of Ephesus had her own overseers, set apart, by the Holy Ghost, for her particular service, to which they were commanded to take heed. The apostles ordained elders in every church. Titus was left in Crete, that he might ordain elders in every city, and set in order things which were wanting. The churches in Asia had each her distinct *angel*, or *pastor*, to whom John delivers a message from Christ, to be communicated to the churches. These observations prove, that a man who chooses to officiate as a preacher, where he is unknown ; who wanders from town to town, and from state to state, keeping his external call and qualifications out of sight, carries a most glaring mark of a false teacher. And whatever pretensions he makes of zeal for Christ, and love to souls, he is to be regarded with the same distrust, as a rambling mountebank, who professes a supernatural skill to heal men's diseases, or predict their fortunes. Secularies, who are fixed in no one place ; who exhibit no authentick credentials ; who preach not on the instituted day, in the stated place, under the patronage of settled ministers ; but in contempt of all order, creep into corners, call private lectures, endeavour to fascinate their hearers with the charms of novelty, and, before they can well be known, flee away, and give place to a successor of the same description, come not from the good Shepherd ; but are those thieves and robbers, who come to steal and destroy, and of whom the great Shepherd has warned us to beware. "To such the porter may not open ; and such the sheep may not hear nor follow."

Letter to the Author from a *Friend*.

and party attachments, as an evidence that they are carnal. Errours and corruptions in a church are no reason, why we should withdraw from her communion, until they plainly appear to be fundamental and incurable; they are rather a reason, why we should be watchful to reform the things that are amiss, and to strengthen the things that remain. There can scarcely be a more striking indication of hypocrisy and carnality in a professor of religion, than his separating from the communion of a church, on pretence of corruptions or ungodly members in it, when he himself has never made one single attempt to purge out the corruptions, or to reclaim or remove the ungodly members.

One great end of the institution of churches, and of social worship in them, is the promotion of peace, harmony and love. Those teachers, therefore, whose object is to cause divisions in churches, have nothing of the spirit of the gospel, but are manifestly pursuing a design in direct opposition to it. Jude, describing the impostors who had secretly crept in among Christians, says, ‘These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit. Verse 19. No words can be more plain and descriptive, than those of St. Paul. ‘Mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have received, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.’ Rom. xvi. 17, 18. They deceive by *fair speeches*. They profess uncommon sanctity, high assurance, extraordinary zeal, and immediate communication from the Spirit. As the apostle says, ‘they commend and
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exalt themselves, and measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves, as if they were perfect and infallible standards.—They justify their separations by pretensions, that others are not spiritual enough for their communion—they would form a pure church. The language of their conduct is, ‘Stand by yourselves, come not near, for we are holier than you.’ But what says the God of peace and purity? ‘These are a smoke in my nose; a fire that burneth all the day.’ Isaiah lxx. 5.

The promoters of divisions, the better to accomplish their wicked purposes, are watchful to take advantage of any unhappy circumstance in a church; such as an accidental contention, the discipline of an offending member, the sickness or removal, the death or the temporary absence of the stated pastor: As the wolf leaps into the fold, when the shepherd is withdrawn, or a gap is opened. Paul, who knew their craft better than he wished, says to the elders at Ephesus, ‘I know that *after my departure*, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to *draw away disciples after them.*’ Acts 20, 29, 30. They are industrious to make disciples: But to whom?—To Christ? No, but to themselves. It is with this view that they ramble from fold to fold, and enter into other men’s flocks. So Christ says to the scribes, ‘Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte;’ leaving no art untried for that end. But what is their intention? Is it that their proselyte may be more devoted to God? No: It is that he may be attached to them, and so
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add to their importance. ‘When he is made, says Christ, ye make him more the child of hell than yourselves.’ Your corrupt flatteries only harden him in his wickedness. Matth. xxiii. 15. So Jude says of them, ‘They have men’s persons in admiration because of advantage;’ esteeming and applauding this and that man, not on account of his real virtue and worth, but only on account of his readiness to serve *their* designs. ‘No, no,’ they will tell you, ‘we have no such unworthy aims: But the churches are fallen from the gospel purity. And we are pressed in spirit to testify against them; we would by all means save some.’ Is this their intention? Why then climb they over the walls, instead of entering by the door? Why creep they in unawares, instead of walking upright? Why apply they not to the pastors of churches, to convince them of, and reclaim them from the supposed errors and corruptions? Would not this be the surest and directest way to reform corrupt and erroneous churches? This is the way that Christ has pointed out. When John was sent to the degenerate churches of Asia, did he neglect the stated pastor, and address the people without *his* knowledge? Did he attempt to disaffect them to, and detach them from *his* ministry? Did he cause divisions and separations in order to make one pure church out of seven corrupt ones? No: John’s letters are directed immediately to the *angel*, or *pastor* of each church, to be by *him* communicated to the people. Thus the spirit spake to the churches. John acted by command of Christ. ‘To the *angel* of the church write’—‘These things saith the *Son of God*’—‘He that hath an ear let him hear, what the spirit saith to the churches? The churches

were

were to hear what was spoken in this way : But they were not to hear every man who came in the garb of a teacher, and who, by his high pretensions to inspiration, subverted the order which Christ had settled. There were enough such among them. Therefore one church is reprov'd, because she suffer'd them to teach, who falsely call'd themselves prophets : And another is commended, because she could not bear them that were evil ; and tried them, who said, they were apostles, and were not ; and found them liars.

It is a certain mark of a false teacher, if under pretence of reforming churches, he causes divisions in them. There were corruptions in most of the Asiatick churches : In some of them there were but few members, who had not defiled their garments. And what were these few to do ?—Withdraw, lest they should be infected with the filthy garments of their brethren ?—No : But to watch and keep their own garments, to save others with fear, and encourage the purity which remained. Rev. ii. and iii. chapters.

VIII. False teachers usually attend more to the form, than to the power of godliness.

The preaching of the apostles was rational, solid, and convincing. It tended to make men wise and good, humble and holy, pious and benevolent — They taught that, ‘ the kingdom of God was not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost’ — that ‘ in Christ neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision availed ; but a new creature, keeping the commandments of God, and faith working by love.’ Their doctrine was according to godliness. Impostors rather lay weight

on certain distinguishing tenets and usages of their own; on particular modes and forms; on the means and instruments of religion; on things suited to strike the passions and captivate the affections. With men of this character, conversion, though perhaps much talked of, is only coming over to their sect, and adopting their peculiar sentiments and forms. When they gain proselytes to their party, they boast the number of their converts; and urge their success, as an evidence that God is with them. The blind, hypocritical guides, so often reproved by our Saviour, made religion to consist more in tything mint, anise and cummin, in long and noisy prayers, and frequent fasts, than in righteousness, mercy, faith and the love of God. Matth. xxiii. Those vagrants, who went out from the apostles, because they were not of them, and who subverted the souls of the believers, taught, that except men were circumcised, and observed the ceremonies of the law, they could not be saved. Acts xv. The false apostles in Corinth, and evil workers in Philippi, had confidence in the flesh, in external rites and forms; they gloried that they were Hebrews, Israelites, and the seed of Abraham. 2 Cor. xi. Phil. iii. 2, 3, 4. The perverters of the gospel in Galatia turned their hearers to weak and beggarly elements, and taught them to observe days and months, times, and years. Gal. iv. 9, 10. The unruly and vain talkers and deceivers in Ephesus and in Crete, who crept into houses, and subverted whole families, had only a form of godliness; they denied the power of it. They sought to please such as could not endure sound doctrine, and to gratify their itching ears.

They

They humoured the disposition of those, who, after their own lusts, heaped to themselves teachers ; they amused them with fables, instead of edifying them with sound doctrine. 2 Tim. iii. and iv. chapters. Titus i. 10, 11.

The apostles of Christ used great plainness of speech ; by manifestation of the truth commended themselves to every man's conscience ; warned and taught every man in all wisdom, that they might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. The false apostles aimed only to move the passions, please the fancy and excite the admiration of their hearers. ' They allured them with *great, swelling words of vanity* ;' with words tending both to exalt themselves, and swell the pride and self-confidence of their deluded admirers. They might boast of their numerous converts ; but converts made only by the agitation of the passions, without instruction of mind or change of temper, are but as ' trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.'

The ancient Jews, in their corruptest state, called frequent assemblies, appointed solemn meetings, and multiplied their offerings ; they sought God daily, asked of him the ordinances of justice and took delight in approaching to him, as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinances of their God. But God's instituted sabbath and worship was no delight to them. They would worship God in any time or manner, except that which he had prescribed. The prophet is therefore directed to cry aloud against them, and teach them their transgression. Isaiah lviii.

However zealous we are to heap to ourselves
teachers

teachers, and multiply to ourselves seasons of worship, if we neglect the worship of God on the day and in the place, which he has appointed, our religion is but an empty form. Such a perversion of God's ordinances proceeds not from spiritual zeal, but from worldly lust.

IX. This sort of teachers are described as opposing subordination under insidious pretensions of liberty.

The apostle cautions the Ephesians, that 'they be not carried away—by the flight of men and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive.' Chap. iv. 14. He alludes to the fraudulent dexterity of practised gamesters in managing a die, or cube, as the word signifies, which they will throw with such a flight as to make the side come up which they wish. Much so crafty deceivers toss men about by addressing their feelings, and plying them with subjects suited to agitate their passions. And, for this spiritual legerdemain, they seldom find a more handy instrument, than the form of liberty. Their first object is to unsettle people's minds from the doctrine and order of the gospel, by insinuating, that their understandings have been imposed on, and their consciences enslaved, and it is time to assert their liberty. If they can only set men afloat, they hope to take the direction of them into their own hands. This game the devil too successfully played with our progenitors in Eden. He insinuated, that they were held in ignorance and blind obedience; and if they would throw off the restraint, their eyes would be opened. The ministers of Satan use the same artifice. Corah would persuade the Jews, that they were led about blindfold by Moses, and priest-riden

den by the standing order. Peter and Jude describe seducers, as 'despising government,' and endeavouring, under pretence of liberty, to level all distinctions : As 'murmurers and complainers ; presumptuous and self-willed ; and as sporting in their deceptions :' As headstrong in their ways, and incapable of being mended by counsel, or reclaimed by reason.*

Paul gives the same account of them in his second letter to Timothy. He says, 'Perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own-selves, covetous,' teaching things which they ought not for filthy lucre's sake ; 'proud, and boasters' of their own superior sanctity ; 'evil speakers and disobedient to parents' under pretence of being more godly than they ; 'unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, covenant breakers,' or disregarding the covenant obligations which they are under

der

* Peter mentions this among other marks of false teachers, that in their festivals or assemblies, *they sported themselves with their own deceivings* : Or with certain devices to deceive their followers ; thus *beguiling unstable souls*. Ireneus, a Christian father, who wrote soon after the apostles, has mentioned a particular device, which Peter is here supposed to allude to. Speaking of these hereticks, he says, 'They made it their custom, in their festivals, *sortibus ludere*, to play with lots.' How these lots were applied, Peter may be supposed to intimate, when he says, their *sporting* was to *deceive* and *beguile*, that they might better *exercise their covetous practices*. It is probable that these deceivers, pretending, that a lot drawn in a particular manner was a divine decision, took upon them thus to direct men's conduct, and to predict their destiny. Hence it appears that the impious practice, lately known among us, of discovering men's spiritual state by a *lottery*, is not so novel, as some have imagined. Something similar to it seems to have been in use among those religious gamblers who vexed the church in, and soon after the apostles' times. But the use of passages of sacred writ in a way of lottery, is a species of impiety probably unknown to the ancients. This improvement on the old plan modern gamblers may doubtless appropriate.

der to the church of God ; ‘ false accusers, incontinent,’ or much given to lust ; ‘ fierce’ and malignant in their tempers ; ‘ heady and high-minded :’ And yet assuming ‘ a form of godliness !’ ‘ Of this sort are they who creep into houses, to lead the simple captive. From such turn away.’ What is the liberty, which such goodly patrons procure ? The apostle calls it *captivity*, or *subjection to divers lusts*. It is a liberty, which begins in licentiousness and ends in bondage. Peter says, ‘ They allure through the lusts of the flesh those who had escaped from them that live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption ; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought into bondage.’ 2 epistle, ii. 18, 19. They relax the strict precepts of the gospel, preach doctrines suited to men’s corrupt inclinations ; flatter their spiritual pride, and bolster them up with false hopes by hastily pronouncing them in a state of grace. Thus delivering them from the restraints of fear, they plunge them into more absolute bondage to their lusts, and make their last state worse than the first.

I would observe once more.

X. False teachers corrupt the word of God and handle it deceitfully. In opposition to them Paul says, ‘ We are not as *many*, who corrupt the word of God. We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty—not handling the word of God deceitfully—’ 2 Cor. ii. 17—and iv. 2. One common way in which they corrupt the word is, by ‘ turning the truth into fables,’ or by rejecting the plain, literal meaning of scripture for the sake of a mystical, allegorical sense, which they absurdly call the

the 'spiritual sense.' Thus they make the whole Bible uncertain, and are at liberty to give every text a fanciful turn, which best serves their own purpose, or pleases the humour of their hearers.

There were, in the apostles' days, some of this fantastick complexion. They denied the literal incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ; and affirmed that his body was only spectral, and his death and resurrection only illusive. They professed high perfection in holiness, absolute freedom from sin, clear discernment of spiritual things, uncommon illuminations from God. It is manifest, that the epistle of Jude, and the first epistle of John, were written in opposition to these enthusiastick, mystical religionists. Jude calls them 'dreamers;' men whose religious notions were as wild and incoherent, as the sports of imagination in a dream.

Some deistical writers have taken this method to subvert the credit of revelation: and the same artifice others have used to propagate their irrational and unscriptural opinions.

Nothing can be more dangerous than this way of interpreting scripture. If we deny its literal meaning, and conceive the real sense to be hidden in mysteries, allegories and fanciful allusions, we entirely destroy its use: And then, in our inquiries after truth and duty, what rule shall we find to guide us? Every man's fancy must be his guide, which, like an *ignis fatuus*, will mislead the wandering pilgrim into bogs and morasses of error, and finally ingulph him in everlasting ruin.

I have now laid before you some of the distinguishing characters of false teachers; and you will consider and remember, that they are characters:

ers drawn, not by me, but by the sacred scriptures. Where they apply, let them apply. If you perceive that you have hitherto been under false teachers, it is time to renounce them and seek others: If you find otherwise, act accordingly. Teachers you are to have; but let them be gospel ones. You must judge for yourselves; but if you judge wrong, it is at your peril. 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life, and few there be that find it: Therefore beware of false prophets.' Some seem to think it pretty indifferent whom they follow. If it be so, tell me why our divine Lord, and all his apostles, have taken so much care to guard you against impostors and intruders; and why they have given you such perpetual cautions against them?

If you suspect, that the doctrines of religion believed by your fathers, and the order of the churches, and the manner of introducing and supporting publick teachers, which have generally obtained in the land, are unscriptural and destructive; if you imagine, that the churches in the country have been no better than synagogues of Satan; that God has never owned them as his churches, nor blessed the word and ordinances administered in them; if you suppose, that your fathers have been only fools and hypocrites, and that you, grown better and wiser, are bound as Christians, to encourage innovations tending to the subversion of these churches; if these are your honest sentiments, this only would I learn of you; when did piety and virtue, peace and good order most abound?—In the days of our fathers?—Or since these supposed improvements have taken place?

There

There are some things in religion, which all must allow to be great and essential; such as justice, mercy, faith, benevolence, peaceableness, condescension and humility. The promotion of these is one great end of social worship, and of all special institutions. If we find, that any particular opinions and usages do in fact answer this important end, there is a strong presumption in favour of them. But if, on the contrary, as new sentiments and forms take place, they who adopt them become more swollen with pride and self-confidence; more apt to vilify, censure and condemn their fellow Christians, and more industrious to sow discord among brethren; this is a shrewd sign, that their notions are not founded in truth: At least it proves, that their religion has done *them* no good.

When a minister warns his people against innovations in doctrine and worship, against heaping to themselves teachers, and countenancing divisions in churches, it is common that they impute to him some selfish design. Whatever opinion you may have of your own minister's views in preaching the gospel, yet if you only consider him as a man not divested of the common feelings of humanity, you will know it is impossible, that he should be indifferent to your interest. Can you imagine, that one, who has ministered to you, and been conversant with you, in all circumstances of prosperity and adversity, from his youth for near thirty years; who has seen a great part of you grow up under his ministry; who has been supported by your liberality, and happy in your steady friendship; can you imagine, that such an one will not *naturally* care for you? Can a stranger, on a transient interview,

have feelings like him? Believe the things now offered to be warnings of love.—I know them to be words of truth.

It is a day, when the churches in the land are in danger; and you are not exempt. Vice and immorality prevail; destructive errors make progress; the minds of many are unsettled from the truth, and from the order of the gospel; important doctrines are denied or called in question; sacred institutions are treated with contempt; and notions subversive of peace and virtue are zealously propagated and eagerly embraced. But be not you carried about with divers and strange doctrines. It is a good thing, that the heart be established with grace.

The remarkable prevalence of error and disorder in churches, at this particular time, proceeds chiefly, I imagine, from two causes. First, from the great carelessness and stupidity of former years, in consequence of which, many have grown up unprincipled in religion, and unfurnished with doctrinal knowledge, and so are peculiarly exposed to the impositions of designing men, and utterly unprovided for their own defence. And, secondly, from the natural operations of the late civil war. Though it ultimately became a *national*, yet, in its origin and earliest stages, it was properly a *civil* war. And such a war seldom fails to produce confusion in religion. The reason is obvious: In a civil war the same people, divided into opposite interests, are filled with more violent animosities, than those which take place between contending nations. The mutual jealousies and resentments, zeal and engagedness of party against party, augmented

mented by mutual recriminations, proximity of situation, and the remembrance of past connexions, put the mind on the stretch; disturb the nervous system, and throw the spirits into an agitation nearly bordering on enthusiasm. To aggravate the animosity, religion is usually introduced on both sides, and, contrary to her mild disposition, is compelled to bear a part in the keen and angry controversy. In such a state of mind, people are peculiarly susceptible of delusive impressions; consequently new teachers, who rise up, and labour to infuse into Christians jealousies of each other, or of their stated instructors, are listened to with avidity, and received with credulity. At such a time men become a much easier prey to error and seduction, than in those calmer periods, when their spirits are more serene and dispassionate. And Satan doubtless takes advantage of the turbid scene, more darkly to ply his temptations, and more successfully to spread the confusion.

You have need, my brethren, to be peculiarly on your guard. Beware, lest, being led away with the error of the wicked, you fall from your own steadfastness. Remember the sacred obligations you are under as professors of religion. Let your faith in the truth of the gospel be confirmed by those appearances in the state of the church, which the apostles have *so expressly foretold and so plainly described*. Attend on God's appointed ordinances, adhere closely to his word, and cease to hear the instructions, which cause to err from the words of knowledge. Let your minds be calm in all your religious inquiries. Let not passion, jealousy or party

party design have any influence in forming your principles, or determining your practice.

Consider that religion is a matter of infinite importance; a business whose consequences are not terminated with time, but reach forward into all the depths of eternity. Treat it always as a most serious concern; prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

‘But why all this ado about false teachers,’ some will ask, ‘and why are ministers so averse to assistance in bringing souls to Christ? The husbandman, if the harvest is great, rejoices to see labourers come into his field.’

My brethren, the field is not ours; it is our Master’s. Ye are God’s husbandry; we are his stewards, and must obey his orders. We rejoice in the help of those, whom he approves and sends.—But if we silently admit intruders, who purloin the crop; mar the corners of the field; trample the grain, or bind the sheaves so slightly, that they cannot be gathered into his barn; what shall we do when he riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall we answer him?

‘But ought we not to attend on preaching, where we are best edified!’

You are to study the things, which make for peace, and by which you may edify one another, You are to make increase to the edifying of yourselves in love. You are not to be selfish in your religion, any more than in your worldly business. You are to consider one another to provoke to love and good works. If under pretence of personal edification, you pursue the measures which tend to hinder the edification of your brethren, you act
contrary

contrary to the character of Christians, as much as he acts contrary to the character of a good citizen, who manages his worldly business to the prejudice of his neighbour's interest. Mistake not the emotions of passion, the flights of imagination or the occasional flow of affection for godly edifying. You are then edified, when you increase in knowledge, faith, purity, peaceableness, and good works. If you break the bond of peace, and the unity of the spirit, where is your edifying? 'The church is to come together into one place'—'to be builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.' The members of it are to be joined to the head by faith, and to each other by love. If they are divided and scattered, they have not the Spirit of God, nor the temper of Christians, and there is no edifying.

'But what if we have a minister, whose preaching is not agreeable to us; must we hear *him* only?'

If his preaching is not agreeable to the gospel, you ought by no means to be content with it. But what will you do? Will you silently withdraw, and leave your less discerning brethren to perish under his corrupt ministry? Rather take gospel-measures to convince him; or, if he is irreclaimable, to remove him. You are not to scatter away promiscuously from a bad minister; but he is to be put away by a regular, publick censure of the churches, that a good one may succeed. Thus union is to be preserved, and future impositions prevented.

'But a minister may preach the gospel, and yet his *manner* not be entertaining. May we not please ourselves?'

You are sensible, that hearers have a diversity of tastes,

tastes, as well as ministers a diversity of gifts ; and among Christians of the same society there must be some condescension. ‘Ye that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not merely to please yourselves. Let every one of you please his neighbour for his good to edification—’ Paul, Apollos and Cephas preached the same gospel ; but in a different manner. Some were pleased with Paul’s reasoning ; some admired Apollos’s eloquence ; and some were charmed with Peter’s warmth of address. So much might be expected. But when they ran into parties, and some attached themselves to this, and some to that preacher in opposition to each other, what said Paul to them ? ‘Ye are carnal and walk as men.’

Itching ears indicate an ill humour in the blood ; and they who with such ears, *heap to themselves teachers*, are said to do it, not after the spirit of God, but *after their own lusts* : Not because they love religion, but because *they cannot endure sound doctrine*. From such teachers as creep into houses, or churches, to lead the simple captive, you are to turn away. Those who cause divisions you are to mark and avoid. You are not to bid them, God speed.

‘But surely there is such a thing as a justifiable separation ; else why says Paul to the Corinthians, *Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate ?*’ 2 Cor. vi. 17.

Doubtless there is a justifiable separation ; just such an one as Paul recommends. And what is this ?—Not a separation from the church ; for this direction is given to the church ; and Paul could not mean, that the church ought to separate

arate from *herself*: But it is a separation from the vices of the world, and from the idolatries of the heathens. So the apostle explains it: 'What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?' And how were these Christians to separate? The apostle tells them: 'Therefore let us cleanse *ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.—'

'Is there no case then, in which Christians may separate from a church?'

There may be such a case. If a church is so essentially and irreclaimably corrupt, as to cease to be a church of Christ, then, after we have in vain tried the gospel-measures already mentioned, for her reformation, we ought to withdraw from her communion. On this principle the protestants separated from the church of Rome. She had introduced idolatry in its external form, adopted another rule of faith besides the scriptures, set up another head and acknowledged other mediators besides Jesus Christ, and she persecuted even to prison and death, those who testified against her errors and laboured for her reformation. The apostle John, Rev. xviii. 4. speaking prophetically of the corrupt state of this church, says, 'I heard a voice from heaven, saying, *Come out from her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*' Or if a church requires such terms of communion, as we think unlawful, we can have no fellowship with her in divine ordinances, though we may have a charitable opinion of her, as a true church. There is a material difference between a church's holding certain errors, and her making an adoption of those errors a term of communion to others.

others. But in this case she rather excludes us, than we separate from her. Our fathers were, in this manner, driven from the church of England: They owned her as a church of Christ, and would have continued in her communion, notwithstanding certain usages, which they thought unscriptural, if she would have dispensed with their conformity to her therein; but as she made an entire conformity an indispensable term of communion, they thought themselves bound to withdraw. It was not a separation on *their* part, but an exclusion on *her* part. Or if a number of professed Christians should separate from a church with which they are in solemn covenant, and form themselves into a society in opposition to their brethren, and thus cause divisions and offences, however candidly we may think of them, as honest, but deluded Christians, we cannot have communion with them as a church, not only because they renounce us, but also because they combine to subvert such as we suppose to be churches of Christ. We are to mark and avoid them. But smaller errors in doctrine or discipline, when they are not made terms of communion, can never justify such a separation as implies a renouncing of communion. Christ owns and treats the churches in Asia, as his churches, though most of them had greatly degenerated: And far from encouraging the purer christians to withdraw from the rest, he commands them to be watchful and strengthen the things that remain. And let no man dare to judge and despise those, whom God has received. Rom. xiv. 1, 2.

An honest zeal for the purity of churches, is to God an odour of a sweet smell; but complaints
of


of corruption, when they proceed from spleen and hypocrisy, are a smoke in his nostrils. Many, who are loud in complaining of disorders in churches, instead of attempting to reform them, only urge them as pretensions for separating from their brethren, with whom they are in solemn covenant. Instead of adopting the animating language of the Levites to Ezra, *Arise, for this matter belongeth to thee; we also will be with thee;* they only stand and discharge some blind and random reproaches; then face about, and withdraw. Thus they discourage the hearts of their brethren, strengthen the hands of evil doers, and provide a retreat for the guilty, who would evade the just discipline of the church. How frequent is the case, that when an offending brother is admonished for his sins, he defeats the instituted means of his repentance, and seeks refuge from merited censure, by flying to some other sect, who make him welcome with all his sins, having his person in admiration, because of advantage.

To conclude, Be ye all like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that ye may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify God. Be not deceived by false appearances. The kingdom of God cometh not with outward show and ostentation; neither is there occasion to say, Lo, here; or, lo, there; for it is a kingdom within men. True religion is peaceable, modest and humble: Hypocrisy is turbulent, noisy and vain. False doctrines, like dry winds, are blustering and unsteady, violent in their motions, and noxious in their effects. The doctrines of truth are like the gentle dews on the tender herb, and the showers on the grass. Be ye not carried about with every wind of doctrine.

trine. The sincere Christian, rooted and grown up in Christ, and established in the faith, with knowledge and judgment, like the deep-rooted oak, stands firm and unmoved, whatever winds may blow; while false converts and unprincipled professors, like withered leaves, are caught in the giddy whirl, wafted around and made the sport of each wanton gust. Conclude not that there is most true religion, where the flame of zeal seems to mount the highest. Chaff and stubble will spring into a sudden blaze, which towers for a moment, and then expires: Solid fuel burns more moderately, but yields a more steady and genial heat. Paul, while a pharisee, was zealous to madness against the truth; when he became a Christian, his zeal was as much changed as his object. You now see no more of his former madness: His Christian zeal is a calm, rational, firm resolution, bearing him along in the course of duty, with equable motion, through every opposition and danger. The spirit of true religion is not in the storm, the earthquake or the fire, but in the still, small voice.

And now the **G**od of all grace and wisdom grant, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and all judgment, that ye may approve the things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ, and may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of **G**OD.

A M E N.



APPENDIX.

IN the preceding pages we have endeavoured to maintain this position, ‘ That no man has a right to officiate, or ought to be received, in the character of a publick teacher of religion, until he has been approved and recommended by *Elders of Churches.*’

The scriptural evidence in support of our position, we hope cannot reasonably be controverted. But an objection will perhaps meet us from supposed necessity, or historical fact.

‘ Many centuries,’ it will be said, ‘ have elapsed, since Christ commissioned his apostles, and since they ordained their successors : And how can we know, that the succession has been continued without interruption ? And if there has been an interruption, then there was a time, when ordination was taken up anew by private Christians. What then are all present ordinations, traced to their origin, but lay-ordinations ?’

This objection may deserve an answer:

The great question here must be, What is the institution of Christ, and the apostolick usage ? By *these* we must be governed, and these must not be set aside by imaginary necessity, or supposititious facts.

The gospel-history confirms - the position which
we

we have laid down. A ministry in the church is undeniably instituted by Christ—introduction to the ministry, in the apostolick age, was by prayer and the imposition of the hands of *elders*—this usage was invariably, and without a single deviation, continued, as long as the sacred history affords any light—the directions concerning ordinations are given to *bishops*, or *elders*, and to them *only*—no provision is made for cases of necessity, or for the renewal of the ministry, if it should happen to cease—we have an express promise from Christ, that he will support his church, and be with his ministers *always* even to the *end of the world*. When we compare this promise with the institution of the ministry, and the mode of introduction, which immediately followed, we think it can import no less, than that a regular ministry, should never cease in the church, nor any necessity occur for departing from the instituted manner of introduction. We have the institution, the promise and the apostolick practice in our favour; and what more do we need? The promise, so emphatically expressed, and so clearly interpreted by subsequent usage, must, we think, be understood as we have stated it.

It is then by no means necessary, that, by historical deduction, we should prove an uninterrupted succession; we have a right to presume it, until evidence appears to the contrary. If any say, the succession has failed, the burthen of proof must lie wholly on them. Let them from incontestible history, shew us the time, place and manner in which it terminated—who were the last ministers in the line from the apostles—who the first in the

new line—who the laymen that ordained them—and where was the scene of the transaction.—Until we have this information, we rely on the promise of Christ, in the sense in which we understand it.

But it will be asked, ‘What if a number of Christians should be cast on a desolate coast or island, or should emigrate to a country secluded from intercourse with the Christian world, and should have among them no ordained minister? May they not ordain ministers for themselves? May not ministers thus ordained venture to officiate?’

But tell me first, Where is this solitary island or coast—this secluded country of Christians?—Did you ever read of a colony of pious Christians emigrating to a new country, who forgot to take ministers with them; or whom no ministers would accompany or follow? If no such case has ever happened, or is ever likely to happen, it is not strange, that the Head of the church has made no provision for it; nor is it necessary, that we should undertake to remedy his omission.

But probably some will still imagine, that fact is against us. They will tell us, ‘Ordinations came down to us through the church of Rome; and there was a time when that church was so essentially corrupt, that she ceased to be a church of Christ, and her officers ceased to be ministers of Christ; and therefore they, who withdrew from her, at the time of the reformation, having among them no valid ordinations, must have begun them anew.’

But will history support this conclusion? Did the first reformers, distrusting their past ordinations, receive one from their lay-brethren?—The contra-

ry is most evident. The protestant reformers in England early drew up a confession of their faith; in which, as Doctor Burnet says, 'they censure any who should take upon them to preach, or administer the sacraments, without having lawfully received the power from the *ministers*, to whom *alone* the right of conferring that power doth appertain.' Certainly they had no apprehension, that the ministerial succession was at an end.

The Roman church, though at that time exceedingly corrupt, appears not to have materially corrupted her ordinations. In this matter, we do not find, that the reformers alledged any complaint.

Though corruptions early began in the Christian church, yet their progress was gradual and slow. In every age many dissented from them, great opposition was made to them, and large councils of bishops, or ministers, publickly condemned them. The western or Roman church ultimately carried her corruptions to a more extravagant height, than the oriental or Greek church; but even in the former, they never came to their crisis, until the famous council of *Trent*, which was opened more than twenty, and closed more than forty years, after the beginning of Luther's reformation. That council, called by the Pope's bull, and supported by the Emperour's arms, in opposition to the reformers, 'established,' as Doctor Tillotson says, 'several *New Articles* which had *never before* been acknowledged by any general council.' Those new articles, if avowed by some, yet had not been generally received, in their full extent, as now declared. If they had been decreed by one council, it was but a partial one, and they were soon after condemned

demned by another ; and therefore were not to be considered as the received and acknowledged doctrines of the church. At this time, as the Doctor observes, ‘ the errors of the church of Rome rose to their height.’ He demands of the papists, ‘ Where their religion was before the council of *Trent*.’ He challenges them, ‘ to shew a religion, consisting of *all* the same articles which are defined by that council as necessary to salvation, professed by any Christian church in the world: *before that time.*’

Luther and his associates, in their first opposition to the errors of the Roman church, did not consider her, as having *essentially* departed from the gospel, or as being utterly disowned by Christ ; for their primary object was, not to withdraw from her, but to effect a reformation by means which might preserve the general union. They never renounced her, until they and their adherents were excommunicated, and all hopes of union were cut off ; but, on the contrary, demanded a *free* and *general* council, to deliberate on means of accomplishing the reformation so much desired. When Luther was constrained to disclaim that church, Doctor Mosheim observes, ‘ he separated himself from it, only as it acknowledged the Pope to be infallible ; not from the church considered in a more extensive sense ; for he submitted to the decision of the *universal* church, when that decision should be given in a *general* council *lawfully* assembled.’ ‘ This,’ says Doctor Maclaine, was a judicious distinction ; for though the papacy was confounded with the catholick church, they were in reality different things. The papacy had indeed by de-
grees

grees incorporated itself into the church ; but it was a preposterous supplement, and as foreign to its genuine constitution, as a new citadel erected by a successful usurper, would be to an ancient city. Luther acted on this distinction ; he went out of the *citadel* ; but he meant to remain in the *city*, and, like a good patriot, designed to reform its government.' But when the advocates for a general reformation despaired of their object, they came out from that irreclaimable church, that they might not partake of her sins, nor receive of her plagues. And we derive our ordinations from those who came out, not from those who remained behind—from the purer part which embraced, not from the corrupter part which opposed, the reformation. It cannot then be true, that our ordinations came through the church of Rome, if by that appellation is intended the corrupt body which the protestants renounced. And surely none will alledge, that those pious men, who had long opposed her corruptions, and contended for a reformation, were themselves too erroneous to be owned as ministers, or that their hands were too unclean to convey a pure ordination.

One cannot here but feel the striking contrast between those ancient reformers, who laboured to correct the errors, without breaking the union of the church, and certain modern pretenders, who, in the first instance, separate themselves from the churches, and then exclaiming against them as corrupt, promote and encourage divisions in them.

It is observable, that ministers were the first to bear testimony against the prevailing corruptions—the first to stand forth in the cause of truth and purity ;

city ; and God owned them as his faithful servants, and succeeded them in their arduous undertaking.

In the greatest part of Germany, and in many other places, the main body of the clergy soon declared in favour of the reformation, and united their efforts in its cause. In England, more than a hundred years before Luther, the seeds of it were sown by the doctrines of Wickliff. And though their growth was retarded by the long inclemency of the season, yet they were gradually taking root, and, under the first warm beams, they sprang up and grew. The papal jurisdiction, which for ages had been denied, or received with great limitations, by the Kings of England, was totally renounced in 1533, by Henry VIII. and the bishops ; and the scriptures were declared to be the standard of religion. In this reign, Cranmer, as well before as after his promotion to the see of Canterbury, favoured the doctrines of Luther, which by his influence obtained a considerable spread among the people and clergy. In 1547, when Edward VI. who had been educated in the principles of the reformation, came to the throne, the protestant religion, being patronized by the King and his court, and encouraged by many of the bishops, as well as other clergy, generally prevailed. And, after a short interruption in the bloody reign of Mary, it was fully established under Elizabeth in 1558. So that protestancy was in fact the religion of England, a number of years before the conclusion of the council of Trent.

The rapid progress of the reformation, and the vast number of ministers, who early embraced it, make it evident, that there could be no occasion ;
and

and the fervent zeal of the reformed against the errors of popery makes it as evident, that there could be no disposition, to receive ordinations in future from the papal clergy. And therefore, without the labour of tracing a lineal succession, we have clear historical evidence, that our ordinations descended not from the church of Rome, after she became so corrupt, as in the opinion of protestants, to cease from being a true church.

It will perhaps be asked, 'How do we know, but the first reformers had been ordained by some of the vilest men in the Roman church?' But let me ask, How do we know, or is it probable, that this was the case? The reformers themselves appear to have entertained no scruples on this head. Let it still be remembered, that irregularity in ordinations was not made matter of complaint against her; that her corruptions had not so early risen to their height; and that she had not yet established, by a general council, her grossest errors, nor expunged her purest members.

But admitting that a man of corrupt principles and morals acts in an ordination; will his character nullify the transaction? As long as the scribes sat in Moses' seat, Christ acknowledged them as officers of the Jewish church; nor did he deny the authority of the high-priest, though his personal character was far from recommending him.

The person ordained derives his authority to preach from Jesus Christ; not from the men who ordain him. They indigitate the person to be vested with this authority, and officially instate him in the regular exercise of it; but it is Christ's gospel; not their will, which must direct him in the execution

tion of his office. If *they* are corrupt in principles or manners, it will not thence follow, that *he* must preach heresy or immorality. He is ordained to preach the gospel ; and whoever may ordain him, the charge which he receives, and the vow which he makes, bind him to teach, not the commandments of men, but all things whatsoever Christ has commanded.

To break the chain of succession at the link in question, it must be proved, that the persons, from whom the first reformers received ordination, not only were in errors, but had actually ceased to be officers of Christ.

With respect to the ordinations in this land little needs to be said. It is well known, that the first ministers in the country were ordained in England by men whose authority is not controverted. Though some of our fathers supposed, that lay-ordinations might be justified, yet this sentiment was disapproved by their brethren in England ; and was not so long retained here, as to be carried into practice. The instalment of persons already ordained, was in some instances, performed by lay brethren ; but during the first century after the settlement of New-England, ordinations were constantly solemnized by the hands of ordained elders, except in two or three instances ; and even in these there was the presence and concurrence of elders, though they imposed not their hands. President *Stiles* says,* that ‘ no more than one such instance, in the last century, appears with certainty.’ And if there were a few such instances, in different times and places, they affect not the succession ; because,
ordinations

* Election Sermon.

ordinations among us being performed by a number of ministers, not by a single person, it may always be presumed, that some of the number are men regularly authorized.

The President, 'on a full, thorough and laborious inquiry,' affirms, that 'the succession, in the line of presbyters, was preserved without interruption, at the time of the reformation, and the New-England ordinations, in this line, may with assurance be traced back even to the holy apostles.'

FINIS.





