

TREATISE ON BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE OF BAPTISM.

THE apostle, among his six principles of Christianity which constitute the foundation, reckons *the doctrine of baptisms*. Thus intimating, that baptism is to be asserted and adhered to, as a fundamental point in our religion. He uses the plural number (probably) in reference to the different kinds of baptism mentioned in the New Testament; where we read of *the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire*,^a and *the baptism of blood*^b or suffering, as well as of *the baptism of water*. The latter indeed alone is properly so called, the others are termed Baptisms, only by way of analogy and resemblance. And this is the baptism concerning which we are to make further inquiry. The baptism of water, i. e. in plain English, washing with water; though in our translation (and indeed in most others) the Greek word *baptism* is generally retained, as peculiarly significant.

Washing (or *baptizing*) with water, was long used before our Lord's time, not only as a common action, but as a religious rite. It was so used even in some heathen countries;^c and still more among the professing people of God, from the earliest ages. It was prescribed by the law of Moses in almost all cases of ceremonial pollution, and on all occasions that called for peculiar purity. It was customary among the Jews to admit proselytes into their church by baptism, and even their own female children.† In conformity to this sacred custom, John, the harbinger of Christ, who was sent to proclaim his approach, and prepare the way for his coming, admitted persons his disciples by the same rite. A rite which our Lord himself owned, and honoured,

by submitting to it; and that as a part of righteousness.

Water baptism then, when our Lord appeared, was no new thing: it had been applied, in every age of the church, and especially under the Mosaic dispensation, to religious uses. For this reason, among others, our Lord might probably choose it, as one of his institutions; thereby showing, that the spirit of his gospel was not a spirit of innovation and contradiction. And this institution he bequeathed to his church at his departure, as a sacred depositum, to be preserved pure and entire, without further alteration, till his second coming.

The nature of this ordinance, then, it will be proper more particularly to consider.

Those ordinances of worship which are *moral*, and of natural and perpetual obligation, have no difficulty in their explication, (we readily understand what praying, and praising, and reading the word of God are,) but those institutions which are *positive*, require a fuller illustration. Concerning them, the question should be asked, *What mean ye by this service?* (as concerning the Lord's passover, Exod. xii. 26.) And the rather, because unsanctified understandings are so unapt to receive, and so prone to mistake, such institutions. It is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, that in a Christian nation there are so many who bring their children readily enough to baptism, and would take it very hard if it were denied them, who yet understand no more of the ordinance, than that it is the custom of their country, and the usual time of naming their children, and treating their friends. It is therefore requisite to inquire a little into the true nature of this ordinance. And,

FIRST. In general, it is a *sacrament*.

This indeed is a Latin word, and therefore not to be found in the Scriptures; but it is a word which

^a Matt. iii. 11.

^b Mark x. 38.

^c By baptism, disciples were initiated into the secrets of Mythra and Isis, and the priests of Cotyttus were called Baptæ, because by baptism solemnly admitted into their office.

† The Jewish doctors had a tradition, that when the Messiah should come, there would be so many proselytes, that they could not be circumcised, but should be baptized.

the church has long used, and therefore we willingly receive it. Among the Latins, it was used to express an *oath*; (which has ever been accounted a sacred thing;) and more particularly a *military oath*; the oath which soldiers took to be true to the government, obedient to their generals, and never to quit their post, or run their colours.

Waving a discussion of the several definitions of a sacrament, we may acquiesce in Paul's description of one, Rom. iv. 11. where speaking of circumcision, (the initiatory sacrament of the Old Testament,) he calls it a *sign*, and a *seal of the righteousness of faith*.

The tree of life was a sacrament to Adam in innocency; a sign and seal of the covenant of works; *Do this and live*. Since the fall (by which our intellectual faculties are sadly depraved, and the veil of flesh thickened) we have much more need of sacraments; outward and sensible representations of things spiritual, to carry them home with the greater clearness to our understandings, with the more convincing certainty to our faith, and with the stronger impression to our affections. When the sanctified soul shall be released from the body of flesh, or when re-united to it refined and made spiritual, there will be no need of sacraments. These glasses shall be laid aside, when we shall see *eye to eye*, the distant object being brought nearer, and the debility of the organ cured.

But in the mean time, we are, with a cheerful thankfulness, and a ready compliance, to acknowledge the great goodness of God, in condescending to lip to us in our own language; and to represent, seal, and apply to our souls things spiritual, by those things which are natural and ordinary. Thus doth Christ, in the sacraments, *tell us earthly things*, (as some understand John iii. 12.) i. e. spiritual things clothed with earthly expressions; (as there the mystery of sanctification by the metaphor of a new birth;) and if we do not believe, and understand, how should we apprehend those things, if they were spoken to us in their own abstract and simple notions, and in the language of the upper world? God, in the sacraments, speaks to us *after the manner of men; uses similitudes*;^c not only to our ears, as by the ministry of the prophets, but to our eyes, that, if it be possible, spiritual things may that way insinuate themselves into, and get possession of, our hearts.

Thus it hath pleased God to deal with men, in his covenant transactions with them. When he made a covenant with Noah and his sons, never again to drown the world, or interrupt the succession of day and night, he gave them a sacrament,

the *bow in the clouds*; (Gen. ix. 12, 13.) which doubtless was there before, (whenever there was a like disposition of the air,) but never till then a token of the covenant.

Sacraments are instituted to be,

I. Signs.

Not natural signs, as smoke is a sign of fire, but voluntary and instituted. Not purely intellectual signs, as the sign of the prophet Jonas, but sensible and visible.* Not signs barely for memorials, as the heap of stones in Jordan, but signs that do exhibit, and, as instruments, convey. So that the essence, or formal nature, of a sacrament, doth consist in a relative union between the sign and the thing signified.†

II. Seals.

Not bare signs, as the map of a lordship represents that lordship to every one who looks upon it; but such signs as deeds, or charters of feoffment, sealed and delivered, which convey the lordship to the feoffee, upon such conditions; and give him a right and title to the premises, to all intents and purposes, upon the performance of those conditions. Thus the rainbow, Gideon's fleece, the coal from the altar that touched Isaiah's lips, and many others, were not only signs signifying, but signs confirming, the promises to which they were annexed.

But not to expatiate in this large field, let us confine our thoughts to the sacrament of *baptism*. In which (as the nature of a sacrament requires) there is a *sign*, and the thing signified by it.

I. A sign.

And that is washing with water. The *element* is water; the *action*, washing with that water. And here, if we inquire why this sign was appointed for the ordinance of admission, this and no other, it must be referred to the will of the Lord Jesus, who instituted it. And his *will*, in this as in every thing else, is most certainly his *wisdom*. But it may be useful to observe what kind of a sign it is. And,

1. Washing with water is a common thing; common to all persons, to all times, and therefore fitly chosen to be stamped for an ordinance, whereby to admit persons into the belief of the *common salvation*. Jude 3. Such the gospel salvation is. Therefore, in the other sacrament, eating and drinking are the sacramental actions, which are also common actions, used by all the world; for Christ is a Saviour to all, and whoever will, may come and take of the waters of life.

As long as the church was confined to one people, the sign of admission was a thing very unusual, perhaps to note the peculiarity of that dispensa-

^c Hos. xii. 10.

* Sacraments are *ορατα και αισθητα*, *ορατα συμβολα των νοημενων*.

† This, Alice Driver, one of the female martyrs, urged to her examiners, when she was pressed to give her opinion of the sa-

crament of the altar; she asked, What is a sacrament! and being answered, It is a sign: Very true, (said she,) then it is not the thing signified.

tion ; but now the veil is rent, and the partition wall taken away, Infinite Wisdom hath appointed the *common salvation* to be sealed by a *common action*.

2. Washing with water is a cheap thing.

It puts us to no expense ; which may intimate that the poor are welcome to Christ as well as the rich. If he had intended to have taken the rich only into the bond of the covenant, he would probably have appointed some costly ordinance of admission, which would have been more agreeable to the state and spirit of the rich, and within the reach of them only : but God hath called and chosen *the poor of this world*.^d In point of acceptance with God, rich and poor stand upon the same level ; and therefore, since the poor cannot reach a costly ordinance, God will have the rich stoop to a cheap one. The ceremonial institutions were many of them chargeable ; and good reason, because that dispensation had more of the promise of the life that now is. When God had freely given the Israelites *so good a land, houses full of all good things*, (a very considerable grant in that covenant,) they could not complain, if he required, as a chief rent by way of acknowledgment, the *lambs out of their flocks*, and the *bullocks of their stalls*. And yet even then, in divers cases, poverty was considered, as Lev. xii. 8. But now, under the gospel, the appointments are cheap. Christ will reject none for their poverty. As in other things, so in holy ordinances, *rich and poor meet together*.^e In Christ Jesus there is neither *bond nor free*.^f

3. Washing with water is a plain thing.

And the perfection of a gospel ordinance lies much in its simplicity. Baptism is an ordinance which will neither puzzle the understanding with the intricacy, nor burthen the memory with the multitude and variety, of its circumstances. *It is a highway, and a way not hard to hit, the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein*.^g The institution of the water of purification, appointed by the Levitical law, was attended with so many nice circumstances, to be religiously observed, as did not only clog it, and make it difficult, but cloud it, and make it obscure. It was so with the other ceremonial appointments. But the New-Testament baptism is plain. Nothing appointed, but only, *Go and baptize them* : the necessary circumstances are left, partly to Christian prudence, and partly to the directions which the nature of the thing gives. And for additional ceremonies, the institution knows none. It should seem, that some have thought it too plain to please the luxuriant fancies of *men of corrupt minds*, and therefore have been patching and painting it, and tricking it up with their own inventions, adding I know not what significant (or rather insignificant) ceremonies of their own : (witness the Roman ritual :)

but our great Master, who came to abolish the law of commandments, and to introduce a spiritual worship, I am confident, will, another day, give those no thanks who think so meanly of the comeliness he hath put upon his spouse, as thus to dress her up in the tawdry attire of a harlot ; as if that would improve, which doth indeed impair and spoil, her beauty.

4. Washing with water is an easy thing.

It was not a causeless complaint that was made of the ceremonial law, that it was a *yoke, which neither their fathers, nor they, were able to bear*.^h Those who are under it are said to be *in bondage to the rudiments of this world*. And some think, it is this which our Lord supposes those to be *weary of, and heavy laden with*,ⁱ whom he invites to submit to his *yoke*, (i. e. his institutions,) *as very easy and light*. And, certainly, in this ordinance there is nothing hard or uneasy ; no burthen of which there is the least pretence to complain. Indeed, such are the privileges which attend the ordinance, that if our Master had bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it, rather than come short of them ?^k Much more, when he only saith unto us, Wash and be clean ; wash and be Christians.

5. Washing with water is a safe thing.

The ordinance of admission under the law was a painful and bloody rite, and proved fatal to the unwary *Shechemites* ; but there is neither pain nor peril in baptism. The Lord hath made it appear that he is *for the body*, by appointing an ordinance so consistent with its ease and safety. It is so safe, that it may be applied to infants, without the least difficulty or danger ; a presumptive evidence, that Christ designed it for them.

6. Washing with water is an expressive and significant thing.

So it hath been reckoned in other cases ; and so it is in this institution. How could it be otherwise, when chosen by Infinite Wisdom, by him *who did all things well* ? Though the significancy of it ariseth from the institution, yet it hath a peculiar aptness so to signify.^l But this brings us to consider,

II. The *thing signified* ; the *substance* represented by this *shadow*.

This, like the kernel in the nut, is the main thing in the ordinance, viz. the meaning of this service. Now the outward sign is such, as that we are purely passive therein ; *washed with water* ; not washing ourselves ; which intimates, that the chief thing intended to be signified, is that which God in the covenant doth for us, (the communications of his grace and favour, in which we are receptive,) and our obligations and engagements to him, only by way of necessary consequence. The washing with water implies the doing of something *for us*, and *upon us* ; whence we infer, something to be done *by us*.

^d Jam. ii. 5. ^e Prov. xxii. 2. ^f Gal. iii. 11. ^g Isa. xxxv. 8.
^h Gal. iv. 3. ⁱ Matt. xi. 28. ^k 1 Kings v. 13.

^l Neque in sacramentalibus speciebus, quassivit Dominus dignitatem sed aptitudinem.

1. The water in baptism signifies the *blood of Christ*; and the sprinkling of that for justification. The *washing of the body with pure water*, represents the *sprinkling of the heart from an evil conscience*. One great promise of the new covenant is, *that God will be merciful to our unrighteousness, so that the seal of the covenant, as it is a covenant of reconciliation, is principally intended to be the seal of a pardon*. Hence, the Nicene creed supposes the remission of sins to be principally intended in baptism: *I believe in baptism for the remission of sins*. Now, for as much as sin is pardoned, only in and through the merit of Christ's death and sufferings, that pardon is signified, and sealed, by washing with water, which represents the application of Christ's blood to the soul. The blood of the legal victim was necessary to make atonement, (Heb. ix. 22.) therefore the benefits of redemption are often attributed to the blood of Christ, as the meritorious and procuring cause; especially remission of sin. See 1 John i. 7. *The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin*; and Rev. i. 5. *Washed us from our sins in his own blood*. And his blood, in allusion to the legal purifications, is called the *blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24. Compare Heb. ix. 13, 14. Cyril calls baptism the antitype of Christ's sufferings. His passion, with the fruits and benefits of it, are represented and applied, in this ordinance, by washing with water. Hence Ananias's exhortation to Paul, *Arise and wash away thy sins*, Acts xxii. 16. It is generally supposed to have been in the person of the suffering Jesus, that David complained, *I am poured out like water*, Ps. xxii. 14. And there is something of the same metaphor in that expression, *He poured out his soul unto death*, (Isa. liii. 12.) as water was poured out, especially in sacrificing. See 1 Kings xviii. 35. compared with 1 Sam. vii. 6. Thus was a fountain opened, the rock smitten, that thence streams of water might issue for the use of Israel. In baptism this is applied. So that therein, the forgiveness of sins, upon repentance, is sealed by the application of Christ's blood.

It is observable, that the grant of remission is, in both the sacraments, signified and applied, by something that primarily represents the blood of Christ, by which that remission was procured; in baptism by water, in the Lord's supper, by wine. The design of God herein, is to convey spiritual and heavenly blessings to us, in such a way as may most advance the honour of Jesus Christ, and recommend him, and his salvation, to our esteem and affection. He will have us to see all the precious privileges of the new covenant flowing to us in the blood of Jesus. In the water of baptism, we may see (*pretium sanguinis*) the price of blood, written upon all our benefits; which should engage us to prize them, and to

glorify God with them. *It is the blood of these men*, saith David; (1 Chron. xi. 19.) only blood exposed; but this is the blood of the man Christ Jesus; blood actually shed. What a value then should we put upon it!

2. The water in baptism signifies the Spirit and grace of Christ, and the sprinkling of that for sanctification.

It must signify this, as well as pardon by the blood of Christ, for they are inseparable in the application of them. Ye are washed, (saith the apostle,) viz. in baptism, which signifies, both that ye are sanctified, and that ye are justified; for they always go together. The water and the blood came together out of the pierced side of the dying Redeemer, John xix. 34. Wherever Jesus Christ is made of God's righteousness to any soul, it is certain, that he is made of God, unto that soul, sanctification.^m

Fallen man is to be looked upon, not only as guilty, but as defiled; not only as liable to the punishment of sin, but subject to the power and dominion of sin; and therefore as standing in need, not only of a relative change, in justification, by the righteousness of Christ imputed; but of a real change, in sanctification, by the grace of Christ implanted. And this also is signified in baptism: which is therefore called the *washing of regeneration*, Tit. iii. 5. Yea, not only signified, but sealed and applied, conditionally. As is the promise, so is the sacrament; the seal operates, as it is led and directed by the words of the deed to which it is affixed. Now the promise is, *Turn ye at my reproof, behold I will pour out my spirit unto you*: those who are baptized may, upon their turning, therefore, plead their baptism as the seal of that promise.

Now these two, the blood of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ, include all the benefits of redemption: some are the acts of God's grace for us, others are the work of God's grace in us; and both these are signified and sealed in baptism. If then we be not wanting to ourselves, we may from our baptism fetch a comfortable assurance, that God will not be wanting to us. That we might have strong consolation, he has instituted a sign, apt and proper, to signify these two main springs of our comfort and happiness, the merit and grace of Christ; and the particular application of them to us. For being baptized into Christ Jesus, we are *baptized into his death*.ⁿ

SECOND. Having thus opened the nature of this ordinance in general, as it is a sacrament, we come next more particularly to inquire into the meaning of this service.

And our best way will be, to have recourse to the institution, which gave it being as an ordinance, and put the stamp upon it. Bring the word to the

^l 1 Cor. vi. 11.

^m 1 Cor. i. 30.

ⁿ Rom. vi. 3, 5.

ment, and that makes the sacrament. As the impression of the seal upon the wax, and the solemn livery of the instrument so sealed, puts a great lue on that, which, otherwise, is but a mean, common thing. And therefore, as from the institution must take warrant for the practice, so from the stitution we must take *light*, touching the nature the ordinance. When a question was put to our ord Jesus, by the Pharisees, concerning marriage, refers them to the institution and original law, (Matt. xix. 3, 4.) to teach us to go by the same rule other ordinances. Run up the stream of the obrvation (which in a long course sometimes conacts filth) to the spring of the institution, and see *hat it was from the beginning*. We are taking that ethod, in the explication of this ordinance.

The institution of baptism was at Christ's sixth ppearance after his resurrection, viz. that at the ountain in Galilee, not only to the eleven, but to any others of the disciples, probably the five hundred brethren, spoken of 1 Cor. xv. 6. He had mentioned this appointed meeting, both before and after is resurrection: and whereas most of his other appearances were occasional and surprising, this seems o have been solemn and expected. And here, the our evangelists explain and enlarge each other. Matthew, who wrote first, gives the fullest account, chap. xxviii. 19, 20.) *Go ye, therefore, and teach ll nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, nd of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them o observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: nd, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*. Where, we have not only a warrant to nake baptism lawful, but an order to make it a duty.

1. He premiseth his own authority; his commission under the broad seal of heaven, (v. 18.) *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*.

As a divine person, all power was originally and essentially his; but as Mediator, all power was given him. What that power more especially was, he himself tells us, (John xvii. 2.) *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to us many as thou hast given him*. So that this mediatorial power was an authoritative disposition of the eternal states of the children of men, (Rev. i. 18.) *the keys of hell*, (or the unseen world,) including the keys of heaven too. *The world to come was put in subjection, not to angels, but to Christ*, Heb. ii. 5. Jesus Christ is set (*fixed, inaugurated, enthroned*) King upon the holy hill of Zion:^o constituted absolute sovereign in his church; invested with legislative power. As King, he hath sole authority to institute and appoint ordinances which shall be binding; and it is certainly a daring, and very unjustifiable, presumption, for any creature (though calling himself by ever so

great and pompous a name) to assume to himself a like power in the church. To institute ordinances is Christ's prerogative, and a branch of his glory which he neither doth nor will give to another. Our Lord Jesus *glorified not himself* herein, but was called of God to it, (Heb. v. 4, 5.) and his call was completed when he was raised from the dead. Then it was that the Father said unto him, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*. Compare Acts xiii. 33.

It was after his resurrection that our Lord claimed all power. We read of power given him before, (Matt. ix. 6.) *power to forgive sins*—*ἐξουσιαν ἔχει*; but here—*πᾶσα ἐξουσία, all power*. It was by dying that he won the name above every name.^p Now he was entering upon the exercise of his authority; was hastening to the far country, to receive for himself a kingdom.^q It was part of the glory which he claimed as the recompence of his sufferings, John xvii. 4, 5.

Power in heaven and in earth, i. e. in all places: heaven and earth comprehend the whole universe, Gen. i. 1. Jesus is the only universal monarch. He has power in heaven over the angels, (Eph. i. 10.) and power on earth to subdue the Gentile world to his sceptre.

2. He directs his commission to the apostles and their successors. (Compare John xx. 21. *As the Father hath sent me, so send I you*: which speaks not equality of power, but similitude of mission.) Having showed how the Father had sent him, he here sends them. *Go ye*: ye apostles, primarily; (for they were the master-builders who laid the foundation;) including, likewise, their successors in the pastoral office to the end of the world. Ministers are the *stewards* of this, as well as the other *mysterics of God*.^r And much of the wisdom and goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ appears in his appointing such officers in the church. Now he was *ascending on high, he gave gifts unto men*; and they were precious gifts; not only apostles, prophets, evangelists, (extraordinary ministers,) but pastors and teachers, (ordinary ministers,) to continue in succession to the end of time. Though the keys are said to have been given to Peter, perhaps because he was the first who opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, yet all the apostles, and in them all Christian ministers, were invested with the same power; John xx. 23. a power of admitting into the Christian church, according to gospel terms. Nor need we contend for an uninterrupted succession, in a right line, from the apostles; for this power is not received from the ordainers, but from Christ; and ordination is only the solemn designation, approbation, and benediction, of a person judged duly qualified to be the subject of this power.

3. He extends their commission to all nations. *Go ye*; a word of command and encouragement:

^p Pa. ii. 6.

^q Phil. ii. 8.

^r Luke xix. 12.

^s 1 Cor. iv. 1.

Go and fear not; have not I sent you? Those whom Christ sends, have often need of encouragement against their fears, when those whom he sends not, run with boldness. These words broke down the partition wall, which had so long kept out the Gentiles. Hitherto, in Judah only was God known; a little spot; but now the veil is rent, and the despised Gentiles admitted into the holiest. The baptism of John was only for the Jews; the morning star appeared only in that horizon; and even the Sun of righteousness, while rising, was pleased to confine his influences to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*. When he first sent out his disciples, he charged them *not to go into the way of the Gentiles*; (Matt. x. 5.) but now the commission is enlarged, *Go ye into all the world*, Mark xvi. 15. The enmity between the Jews and Gentiles had been very great; but that enmity was now slain, and they *both became one sheep-fold, under the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls*.

Teach all nations; i. e. all whom ye can reach. Exclude none out of the church who are willing to come in, i. e. none who do not exclude themselves. And accordingly, their sound did go *into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world*, Rom. x. 18. *The heathen were given to Christ for an inheritance*; and therefore he sends his apostles into all the territories of his dominions. He having purchased, they must proffer, a *common salvation*.

4. The commission itself is, *Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*.

Here is our warrant, without which we would not, we dare not, baptize. The word which we translate *teach* is, μαθητεύσατε, and I think is not well translated. It is a different word which is used v. 20, *teaching them to observe, διδάσκοντες*—*Go, disciple all nations*, I think it should be rendered.* Make them my disciples, i. e. admit them my scholars. I find the word used only here, and in two other places; viz. Matt. xiii. 52. *every scribe (μαθητεύσας) disciplined unto the kingdom of heaven, (i. e. a Christian scribe, or such a disciple of Christ as is arrived at the standing and proficiency of a scribe,) is like a man that is a householder: and Matt. xxvii. 57. concerning Joseph of Arimathea, ος και αυτος εμαθητευσε τω Ιησου, one who had given up himself as a disciple to Jesus; had disciplined it, or been ranked among the disciples of Jesus; or (as some understand it) had disciplined others to Jesus. So that the word here must signify, to make disciples, as the phrase is John iv. 1. i. e. to admit them into the school of Christ. Thus a Jewish ear would readily apprehend it; for, as Lightfoot observes, discipling was not of persons already taught, but to the end that they might be taught. And in their schools, a person was made תלמיד, a scholar, or disciple, when he gave*

up himself to be trained up by such a master. *Proselytum me fac, ut me doceas*.

I insist so much upon the right sense of the word, not only to vindicate the text from the mistake of those, who will have none baptized (of whomsoever born) till they are thoroughly taught, grounding it on the words of the institution; (which, if rightly Englished, would intimate no such thing; for though infants are not capable of being taught, they are capable of being disciplined;) but also, from hence, to explain the nature of the ordinance. Which is,

I. A solemn admission into the visible church of Christ. *Go, disciple all nations*; open the door to them all; and those who are willing admit by *baptizing them*; let that be the sign and ceremony of admission.

II. A seal of the covenant of grace. *Baptizing them in (or into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. So that we need look no further for the meaning of this service.

I. Baptism is an ordinance of Christ, whereby the person baptized is solemnly admitted a member of the visible church.

It is a discipling ordinance. The professors of the Christian religion were first called disciples, till at Antioch the name was changed, and they were called *Christians*, Acts xi. 26. To disciple all nations then, (to speak according to the change of the title,) is to Christianize all nations. So that baptizing is, as it is commonly called, (significantly enough if it were duly considered,) *Christening*. Not making a person a Christian, *in foro Cali*—in the judgment of Heaven, but declaring him a Christian, *in foro ecclesie*—in the judgment of the church.

1. I say of the *visible church*.

Not of the invisible church, (as it is called,) *the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven*, but the visible church; comprehending all that profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him. Many are baptized, and so taken into that number, who yet remain *in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity*; witness Simon Magus, Acts viii. 13, 23. But, *de secretis non judicat ecclesia*—the church does not judge the secrets of men. Baptism is an ordinance of the visible church, appointed for the admission of visible church members; admission, not into the internal communion, but only into that which is visible and external, in the profession of faith, and participation of sacraments.

2. I say the *visible church*, meaning the catholic universal church.

Baptism is not to be looked upon as the door of admission into any particular church. The eunuch could not be admitted into such a church, and yet was baptized. And hence appears the mistake of those who maintain, that because they were baptized

* Discipulate (saith Bullinger, with an apology for the harsh-

ness of the word) sive facite mihi discipulos.

to the church of England, they are therefore bound never to leave it, nor attempt any alterations in it.

3. He who seriously professeth faith in Christ, and obedience to him, but is not yet baptized, hath no sort of church-membership, but remote, imperfect, and irregular. Many in the primitive times, upon a mistaken apprehension of the unpardonableness of sin committed after baptism, deferred it long, some even till the dying moment,) who yet are not to be looked upon as outcasts. Many of the martyrs died in the state of catechumens. So that baptism doth not give the title, but recognize it. Only reduce the *power* into *act*, and complete that church membership, which before was only (*in fieri*) in the doing.

Now, when I say that by baptism we are brought into the church, I mean,

1. That we are added to the number. Thus, Acts ii. 41.) those that were baptized, are said to be *added to the church*, i. e. to the number of visible believers. The number of the church militant is daily decreasing by death; baptism is appointed for filling up the vacancy, that there may not want a church to stand before the Lord on earth, while the sun and the moon endureth.

2. We are entitled to the privileges of the church.

Church privileges are either such as are peculiar to true believers, even union and communion with Christ in grace and glory, and fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, by the Holy Ghost; (and though baptism does not give a title to these, it seals and ratifies that title to true believers;) or,

Such as are common to visible believers. And these, baptism, duly administered, doth entitle us to, and invest us in.

Now the privileges of visible church-membership which baptism confers, are such as these:

1. Honour. To be set apart among the peculiar people, and numbered among the chosen. Is it not an honour to bear the name, and wear the livery, of the Lord Jesus? to be called Christians, a people near unto him? To be baptized, is a great preferment; it is to be enrolled in a very honourable corporation; admitted into a society upon all accounts truly great and noble.

2. Safety. The visible church is under God's peculiar care and government. He is a *defence upon all its glory*.¹ Those who are taken into the church (to borrow the Jews' expression) are gathered under the wings of the Divine Majesty; and so are often sheltered from those calamities to which others lie exposed. Baptism is compared to the ark (1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.) which sheltered even Ham from the universal deluge. It is a privilege to be on the protected side.

3. Communion. Baptism gives a title to the or-

dinances. Those who were baptized, we presently find in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers, Acts ii. 41, 42. The word, and prayer, and the Lord's supper, and church fellowship, are the ordinances which those who are baptized may (as they become capable) lay claim to. And is it not a privilege to be interested in the ministers of Christ? *Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas*; variously gifted, but all their gifts bestowed upon the visible church, and intended for the good of its members? the labours, the sufferings, of ministers, for the church's sake? See 1 Cor. iii. 22. and Eph. iv. 11, 12. Is it not a privilege, to be a partaker of the prayers of all the churches? to be remembered by them at the throne of grace, as one with them? Is it not a privilege to sit down with them at the table of the Lord? to be admitted to that feast, that altar, which they have no right to eat of who serve the tabernacles? Is not the communion of saints a privilege? to have a share in the friendship and affection of all who fear God, and the right hand of fellowship in all the ordinances? to be with those among whom Jesus walks, and with whom God is of a truth? to have a nail in God's holy place?

4. Opportunity. The lively oracles are committed to the visible church. It is in the church that the ordinary means of salvation are; *he hath showed his word unto Jacob: there God is known, and his name is great: there the joyful sound is heard; and blessed are they that hear it.*² The visible church, though it is not the fountain of truth, (as the papists would have it, deriving the authority of the Scriptures from the dictates of the church,) yet is the channel of conveyance. It is the *pillar and ground of truth*; (both the body and basis of the pillar;) not as the pillars of a house, on which the house is built, (for in this sense, the church is built upon the truth, not the truth upon the church,) but as the pillar, which hath an inscription upon it, or to which a proclamation is affixed, it holds forth to the view of all what is so put upon it. Thus the church is the pillar of truth. It is a great privilege to be taken into the church, for that is the Goshen, the land of light; out of which there are no ordinary means of saving knowledge. Those who are taken into the church, have gospel discoveries and gospel offers made unto them: and (which is a great advantage, and contributes to the efficacy of the word) by being admitted into the church, gospel offers have more hold of them than when they were without.

3. We come under the laws of the church. Not of this or that particular church, but the universal church. I mean, that being admitted to the privileges, we are engaged to the duties, of the communion of saints.

¹ Isa. lv. 3, 6.

² Pa. cxlvii. 19, 20.

The laws of the church are ; to own the ministers of it, and to esteem them highly in love for their work's sake ; to adhere to its ordinances, and to receive, observe, and keep them pure and entire, as part of the church's treasure ;* to keep to the fellowship of the saints, not *forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but exhorting one another daily* ; to do good in an especial manner to the *household of faith*, i. e. to all in every place, who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, both their Lord and ours ; to own all baptized Christians as our brethren and fellow-members ; and to comfort and edify one another, as we have ability and opportunity. Thus baptism is an ordinance of admission into the visible church. It is also,

II. A seal of the covenant of grace.

This I gather from those words of the institution, baptizing them *in (or into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*.

For the opening of this, I shall endeavour to show what the covenant of grace is ; and then, (from the words of the institution,) how baptism is a seal of this covenant.

1. What this covenant of grace is.

A covenant properly signifies, a voluntary compact or agreement between distinct persons, touching the disposal of things in their power, to their mutual content and advantage. But when we speak of God's covenanting with men, we must remember that he is the sovereign Ruler and Owner of mankind, and therefore, that his transactions with us are not mere covenants, as amongst men, between equals, or at least between persons who were antecedently disengaged. No, God is *the lawgiver who hath authority to save and to destroy*.^a But the revelation of his will, which he hath made, for the direction of our duty to him and our expectations from him, is therefore called a covenant, and proposed to us under that form, because infinite goodness would deal with us in a rational way ; and thus *draw us with the cords of a man* ; (such cords as men are used to be drawn with ;) and that his righteousness in the ruin of the refusers, might be the more magnified.

The same revelation of the will of God concerning man, may be considered, therefore, either as a law, backed with promises and threatenings as sanctions, and so there needs not the creature's consent ; or as a covenant, and so there must be a restipulation from the creature. Now the sacraments relate to this revelation, as a covenant, i. e. a promise upon a condition, to which the sacraments are annexed as seals. The promises are, of reconciliation, relation, and recompence ; the conditions are, faith, repentance, and sincere obedience to the whole will of God. This covenant is founded on free grace, and purchased by the blood of Christ. It was re-

vealed, *at sundry times, and in divers manners*, to the Old-Testament saints ; and now, under the New Testament, may be considered two ways ; viz.

1. In its internal administration : as savingly closed with by true believers, who join themselves unto the Lord, by a free and hearty consent, which entitleth them to the saving benefits of this covenant. And it is not to this, that the sacraments are appropriated : for we find Simon Magus baptized ; and multitudes on the left hand of Christ at the great day, who had eaten and drank in his presence. And the stewards of the mysteries of God would remain under perpetual doubts and uncertainties, if they were to go by this rule in applying the seals. *The Lord infallibly knows them that are his*, but we do not. In this internal administration, the Spirit is the seal, Eph. i. 13.

2. In its external administration : and so considered, all who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in the covenant at large, and have a right to the seal. As the church of the Jews ; *with many of whom God was not well pleased ; yet to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises*, Rom. ix. 4.

Now the sum and substance of this covenant is, that *God will be to us a God, and we shall be to him a people*, Heb. viii. 30. This is frequently set down in Scripture as the abridgment of the covenant ; which includes all the other promises and conditions. All the privileges of the covenant are summed up in this one, *that God will be to us a God* ; and all the duties of the covenant are summed up in this, *that we must be to him a people*. And herein it is certainly well ordered and sure ; is all our salvation, and should be all our desire. I am to show,

2. How baptism is a seal of this covenant.

Covenanting signs and ceremonies have generally been used by all nations by which contracts have been confirmed and ratified ; and those signs, not natural, but instituted. We call this ordinance a seal, because with us the usual way of confirming contracts is by *sealing* ; which gives validity to the covenant, and mutual assurance of the sincerity of the covenanters ; who do hereby, with the more solemnity, oblige themselves to the performance of the covenant. Now *God being willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, hath confirmed it, not only with an oath, but with a seal, that by all these immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie*, (or to put a cheat upon his creatures,) *we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the everlasting covenant, to lay hold on that hope as the horns of the altar*, Heb. vi. 17, 18.

There was a covenanting sign instituted by the

* The *κεκτημενα* of the family.

^a James iv. 1.

Jewish law, which was very significant; in case of a person's binding himself perpetually to his master, his ear was to be bored with an awl to the door-post, by his master, (Exod. xxi. 6.) by which the master engaged himself to continue his protection and provision, and the servant became obliged to continue his duty and obedience. Thus was the covenant sealed. Baptism is the seal of such a covenant between God and man; an act which obligeth us to be his willing servants for ever. More plainly, when I say that baptism is a seal of the covenant of grace, I mean,

1. That God doth, *in* and *by* that ordinance, assure us that he is willing *to be to us a God*, according to the tenor of the covenant. A sense of our meanness as creatures, especially of our vileness as sinners, might make us despair of the honour and happiness of such an interest and relation; this ordinance therefore is appointed, not only to convince us that God is reconcilable, but to convey to us all the benefits of reconciliation upon gospel terms. This is the covenant, (Gen. xvii. 7.) *To be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee*, and in token thereof, (v. 10.) *you shall be circumcised*. And forasmuch as our defilements by sin are the greatest discouragements of our faith in God as our God, to obviate those discouragements, the instituted seal is a significant sign of our cleansing from those defilements.

2. That God doth, *in* and *by* that ordinance, engage us to be to him a people.

His creating us, and preserving us, and all the gracious methods of his providence concerning us, engage us *to be to him a people*: because *he made us, and not we ourselves*, it follows, *that we are his people*, Ps. c. 3. But he doth by this ordinance lay a stronger and more explicit tie upon us to be his; *bore our ear to his door-post*; takes us to be a *people near unto him*; obliges us, not only by the bond of a law, but by the bond of a covenant, to be his. And all little enough; our corrupt hearts are so very treacherous and deceitful, and the enmity of the carnal mind so strong and inveterate. And because our cleansing is a necessary qualification for this relation, we are thus taken to be *to God a people*, by washing; for *he purifies to himself a peculiar people*.^v The church *must be sanctified and cleansed, with the washing of water*.^w We must first have our consciences *purged from dead works*, before we can acceptably *serve the living God*.^x God doth in this ordinance, as it were, lay hold of us, set us apart for himself, and bind us to our duty; that if afterwards we be tempted sacrilegiously to alienate ourselves from him, and to serve under the opposite banner, the abiding obligations of this ordinance may help to keep us steady.

I will be their God, and they shall be my people, is

the meaning of this service. It is a seal to those articles of agreement, which we find engrossed in the Scriptures, between God and man. An ordinance in which we are marked for God, and receive his image and superscription; marked for his service, marked for his salvation.

This being laid down in general, I now proceed to open it more particularly, from the institution; *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. That is,

1. By authority from the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

All the Persons of the blessed Trinity concur, as in our creation, (Gen. i. 26. *Let us make man*,) so to our redemption, salvation, and consolation. If we ask the question which Christ put concerning John's baptism, *The baptism of Jesus, is it from Heaven or of men?* it must be answered, *It is from Heaven*. Which stamps a very great honour upon the ordinance. Though to a carnal eye it may appear mean and contemptible; yet looking upon it as beautified with the sacred authority of Heaven, it appears truly great: and it is comfortable to those who are called to be *stewards of the mysteries of God*, that they act by an authority which will bear them out.

2. Invoking, or calling upon, the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

To do what we do in the name of God, is to sanctify all we do by prayer. So great an action as this, doth in an especial manner require that solemnity. It is prayer which fetcheth down that presence of God with the ordinance, and that blessing of God upon it, which is really the beauty and grace, the life and efficacy, of the ordinance.

3. There is more in it than this: we are baptized (*εἰς ὄνομα*) into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: i. e. in token of our believing in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

It is said, (1 Cor. x. 2.) that the Israelites were baptized, *εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν*—into *Moses*; which refers to (Exod. xiv. 31.) *they believed Moses*, or in *Moses*. Faith has in it an assent of the understanding, and a consent of the will; so that to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is to be baptized into a solemn profession of these two things.

Our assent to the gospel revelation concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and our consent to a covenant relation to these divine Persons. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Three Persons in the ever blessed Trinity, are in the New Testament not only *made known*, but tendered and offered to us. The gospel contains, not only a doctrine but a covenant, and by baptism we are brought into that covenant. The Jews were *baptized into Moses*, i. e. were thereby committed to the conduct of Moses: and so

^v Tit. ii. 14.

^w Eph. v. 26.

^x Heb. ix. 14.

(Cor. i. 13, 15.) Paul pleads, that he baptized few or none, for this reason, lest they should say he baptized *in his own name*, i. e. into himself, and his own guidance as their ruler. So that to be *baptized in the name*, is to be solemnly devoted, and dedicated, to the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*.

Now this dedication to God, this entering into covenant with the whole Trinity, implies two things:

1. A renunciation of every thing that is contrary to God.

An oath of allegiance to God, as our rightful Sovereign, (and such an oath baptism is,) doth necessarily imply an oath of abjuration of all those powers and interests, which stand in opposition to, or competition with, his crown and dignity in our souls. The dedication of ourselves to the conduct of God, implies an utter disclaiming of the rule of the *devil*, the *world*, and the *flesh*: for what fellowship hath light with darkness, or how can two such masters be served? Hence we are said to be *buried with Christ by baptism*, and *planted in the likeness of his death*, (Rom. vi. 4, 5.) which intimates our dying to every lust and sin.

In the early ages of the church, when adult persons, who had been trained up under the power of Pagan delusions, were baptized Christians, it was required, that they should solemnly and expressly renounce that heathenism in which they had been brought up, and disclaim all relation to those gods they had been taught to worship; that none might be admitted, who retained any good opinion of their former idolatries and superstitions; and that those who were admitted, when tempted to apostasy, or base compliances, might be deterred by a serious reflection upon so solemn and express a renunciation: and a form of renunciation, similar to that of the ancient church, the English liturgy still uses. And even those who have laid aside the form of renunciation, as not countenanced by the precepts or examples of Scripture, allow that the renunciation itself is in effect made, being included in that dedication to God, which enters into the essence of Christian baptism.

Our dedication to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in that ordinance, then, necessarily implies a renouncing,

1. Of all subjection to Satan's rule. It is throwing off the devil's yoke. The sinful heart is represented in Scripture as Satan's palace, where he resides, where he reigns, where he keeps court, where he keeps garrison. Now our covenanting with God implies, a revolt from Satan's jurisdiction. Baptism wrests the keys of the heart out of the hands of the strong man armed, that the possession may be surrendered to him *whose right it is*. When, by baptism, we enlist ourselves under Christ's

banners, we thereby proclaim war with the devil and all his forces.

God, in this ordinance, seals to us a deliverance from Satan, a rescue out of that house of bondage, that iron furnace, the terrifying and tormenting power of the devil; and we seal to him a compliance with that deliverance, by a steady opposition to his tempting, deceiving power, and a constant disowning of his conduct; keeping ourselves, that we may not be touched by that wicked one, in whom *the world lieth*.

2. Of all consent to fleshly lusts. The flesh is another enemy against which, in baptism, we declare war. We promise to quit the conduct of that *carneal mind which is enmity against God*; engaging to be no longer guided by its dictates, and governed by its laws. The water of baptism is designed for our cleansing from the spots and defilements of the flesh. Hence, the apostle urgeth our baptism as a pressing motive to persuade us to the mortification of sin, Rom. v. 2, 3. Those who are *baptized into Christ*, have professedly *put on Christ*; and it is inconsistent with our putting on Christ, to *make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*.^f Being in baptism enrolled among those pilgrims who are journeying towards Canaan, we engage to abstain from, and fight against, those *fleshly lusts that war against the soul*.^g

3. Of all conformity to this present world.

We disclaim, in baptism, the customs of this world as our rule, the company of this world as our people, and the comforts of this world as our portion. Grotius thinks, that St. Paul hath an especial reference to the baptismal covenant, in that caution. (Rom. xii. 2.) *Be not conformed to this world*. Being by baptism engaged to conform to the designs and interests of the other world, we must needs be disengaged from a compliance with the counsels and concerns of this world. By this ordinance, we are engaged to swim against the stream of the impieties and follies of the age in which we live. We covenant not to take up with that *any good* which will satisfy the most of men; not to accept of a portion in this life. We are by Christ delivered from this present evil world, and in baptism we promise never to deliver ourselves up to it again, but to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free*.

Thus stands our baptismal renunciation; which is notoriously contradicted by every wilful act of compliance with the allurements of the flesh, the world, and the devil. Baptism also implies,

2. A resignation of our whole selves to the Lord.

This must always accompany that renunciation. *If thou wilt return, O house of Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me*. Our quitting the rule of sin, and Satan, and the world, is not that we may be lawless,

^e Rom. viii. 7.

^f Rom. xii. 6.

^g 1 Pet. ii. 11.

but that we may be brought under the yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ. The tyranny is exchanged, not for anarchy, but for rightful sovereignty. It is not enough that we overrun the service of the citizen of the country, but we must submissively return to our Father's house. And this part of the covenant is sealed in this sacrament. In baptism we are not only *planted in the likeness of Christ's death*, but also *of his resurrection*, Rom. vi. 4, 5.

1. It is a resignation of ourselves, our whole selves; body, soul, and spirit. This is what is given up in baptism. (2 Cor. viii. 5. *First gave their own selves unto the Lord.*) It is not a resignation of our estates only, and relations, but ourselves. The soul, and all its faculties; the body, and all its parts, and powers, must be presented, as a living sacrifice. It is a marriage covenant, in which the parties mutually give themselves to each other; and in such a case, *if a man would give all the substance of his house for love*, (i. e. instead of it,) *it would be utterly condemned. I will be for thee, and thou shalt be for me*, that is the covenant, Hos. iii. 3. And therefore, in baptism, the seal is applied to the person, signifying the dedication of the man; as livery and seisin, is the giving of the premises intended to be conveyed. *Whose I am*, is the apostle's acknowledgment, Acts xxvii. 23.

2. It is a resignation to the Lord. That is the meaning of our being baptized into his name. It is declaring that we are his, and *subscribing with our hand to the Lord.*^b Paul, when he is reproving the Corinthians for saying, *I am of Paul*, uses this argument, *Were ye baptized in the name* (or rather *into the name*) *of Paul?*^c which intimates, that if they had been baptized into his name, they would have been of him. So that to be baptized into the name of God, is to be of God.

Now this resignation or dedication of ourselves to the Lord, is two-fold.

(1.) In respect of duty. We resign ourselves to God, to be ruled and governed by him; to be commanded by his laws without dispute or contradiction: saying, as Paul, (Acts ix. 6.) *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do. Other lords have had dominion, but from henceforth, by thee only will I make mention of thy name.*^k (2d.) In respect of dependence. We resign ourselves to God, to be portioned and made happy by him. When we swear allegiance to him, we do withal put ourselves under his protection, and profess our expectation of all good from him. Baptism fixeth our eyes upon him, *as the eyes of a servant upon the hand of his master*,^l not only for work, but for wages. This is *to yield ourselves to the Lord*,^m to be made holy by him, and to be made happy by him. And it is no more than we are already obliged to, by manifold ties: only in this ordinance,

we do more explicitly signify our consent to that, which we were bound to before; and to all the other ties, add an obligation of our own.

Now in the form of baptism, all the persons of the blessed Trinity are named; no doubt, (1st.) To confirm the doctrine of the Trinity; which, without controversy, is one of the greatest *mysteries of godliness*; and, (2nd.) To clear the duty; or that we might the better see, and be affected with, our obligations to these sacred persons; and might from thence take direction, both what to do, and what to expect.

1. We are baptized *in* (or *into*) the name of the Father. That is, thereby is sealed our dedication to God the Father; professing to believe that there is a God, and to consent to take him for our God. *It is avouching the Lord to be our God.*ⁿ And the consent of the will must be guided by the assent of the understanding. We take God to be that to us which he is, and declare our consent to those moral relations, in which he is pleased to stand to us. Now, that which in the creed we profess to believe, in an especial manner, concerning God the Father, is, that he is the Creator: this then must, in baptism, be applied and acknowledged concerning ourselves; he is my Creator. We give up ourselves to him as Creator, in all those relations which result from creation. More particularly, we give up ourselves to God our Creator,

(1.) As our absolute owner and Lord; to dispose of us by an absolute sovereignty, and to actuate us by an infinite power, (Psal. ciii. 3.) *He made us, and not we ourselves*, or, as it is in Hebrew margin, *and his we are*: put them both together and they complete the argument; because he made us, and not we ourselves, therefore we are not our own, but his. There cannot be imagined any sovereignty so despotic, or any property so absolute, as that which ariseth from creation. He who gave us our being, without any concurrence of ours, may justly call us his own; and may he not do what he will with his own? That little which our parents contributed to our being, only as instruments, produceth so great a power, property, and interest, that the law of nations makes children not to be (*sui juris*) at their own command: much more is God our owner, who is the fountain of our being. Now in baptism we seal our consent to this, and resign ourselves to him, so as no longer to be *our own*.^o We receive his mark, his image and superscription, and thereby acknowledge him our Owner.

(2.) As our supreme Governor: morally to rule us, as intellectual free agents, by his revealed law; directing us in, and binding us to, that duty, which as creatures we owe him. We hereby consent, that the Lord should be *our lawgiver and our judge*;^p

^b Isa. xlv. 5.

^k Isa. xxvi. 12.

^l 1 Cor. xii. 13.

^m Pa. cxliii. 2.

ⁿ 2 Chron. xxx. 8.

^o 1 Cor. vi. 20.

^p Deut. xxvi. 17.

^q Isa. xxxiii. 22.

agreeing to it as fit, that he who gave *being*, should give *law*. The language of our baptismal engagement is, *Thou art my King, O God!*^q It is a self-surrender to the commanding power of his revealed will.

(3.) As our chief good. He who made us, is alone able to give perfection to his work, by making us truly happy. This hath special regard to the darling attribute of God, his goodness; the source of all that good, which can satisfy the soul's desire. As in baptism we own God for our ruler, so we own him likewise for our benefactor. Christ, speaking of earthly princes, saith, *They that exercise authority are called benefactors:* (Luke xxii. 25.) and they were wont to pride themselves much in the number, compliments, and attendance of their clients, and beneficiaries. Now, to be the Lord's, is to own him for our benefactor, and attend upon him accordingly. *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,*^r is the meaning of our baptismal covenant.

(4.) As our highest and ultimate end. The name of God is often put for his honour and glory, so that being baptized into the name of the Father, seals our engagement to direct all our actions to his glory. This follows upon our regard to God the Father as Creator; for if he is the first cause he must be the last end. If all things are *of him*, by way of creation, and *through him*,^s by way of providential influence, all things must be *to him*, in their final tendency and result. In heaven God is, and will be, *all in all*; and what is heaven upon earth, but making him our *all in all*? Now, the consideration of this should engage us to holiness: we are not our own, and therefore may not live as we please: we are God's, and therefore must glorify him, both with our bodies and with our spirits. It may likewise serve for our comfort. When any thing troubles us, there is great satisfaction in this, that we are the Lord's. David pleads it in prayer, (Ps. cxix. 94.) *I am thine, save me.* If we are indeed his, no doubt he will look after his own.

2. We are baptized *in* (or *into*) the name of the Son.

This seems to have a peculiar emphasis in this administration: and therefore, though the other two are always implied, yet we find this most generally expressed in the New Testament; (see Acts viii. 16; xix. 5. Rom. vi. 3. Gal. iii. 27.) for into his hands the mediatorial kingdom is in an especial manner put. It is to him, that the name is given above every name, and all judgment is committed. Our religion is called, the religion of Christ; the Christian religion. The disciples are from him called *Christians*, Acts xi. 26. *From him, the whole family, both in heaven and earth, is named,* Eph. iii.

15. And therefore baptism, the ordinance of admission into that family, of initiation into that religion, is fitly said to be, into the name of Christ. As those who were initiated into the Mosaic dispensation, are said to have been baptized into Moses, (i. e. given up to God's conduct by the ministry of Moses,) so we are baptized into Christ, i. e. given up to God in Christ Jesus. That is the grand characteristic mark of the Christian religion, of which baptism is the initiating ordinance. The Jews acknowledged God the Father; and they were more agreed concerning *the spirit of the Messiah*, than concerning *the person of the Messiah*; and therefore it was requisite that this should be mainly insisted upon.

Our being baptized into the name of Jesus, doth ratify and seal two things:

(1.) Our *assent* to the truth of all divine revelations concerning him. Baptism is the badge of our profession of the truth *as it is in Jesus*; not only from Christ, as the spring and author, but concerning Christ, as the subject matter. In baptism, we set to our seal that God is true in what he hath made known to us concerning him; namely,

That Christ was, and is, the eternal Son of God, *by a generation which none can declare.* This was the summary of the Eunuch's faith, upon which he was baptized, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,* Acts viii. 37. A short creed, but the rock on which the church is built. That this Son of God in the fulness of time became man, *was made flesh,*^t was born of a woman, and so became Emanuel, God with us. That this Jesus was the true Messiah; the Saviour of the world; sanctified and sent for this purpose by the Father; to whom all the prophets bore witness; and in whom the types and predictions of the Old Testament have their full accomplishment. That in pursuance of his undertaking to redeem and save us, after he had lived a holy, useful, and exemplary life, and preached a divine and heavenly doctrine, he suffered death upon the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, and so to bring in an everlasting righteousness. That after he had lain in the grave till the third day, he rose again from the dead by his own power; and having conversed forty days upon earth, and given many infallible proofs of his resurrection to those who were to preach it to the world, he ascended, in triumph, to heaven; and sat down at the right hand of God: where he ever lives, making intercession for us. That this glorified Jesus is head over all things to the church, i. e. its supreme and only Lawgiver and King. And lastly, That a day is coming, when he will appear in the clouds of heaven, to judge the world, and to render to every man according to his works.

^q Ps. xlv. 4.

^r Ps. lxxiii. 25.

^s Rom. xi. 36.

^t 1 Cor. xv. 28.

^u John i. 14.

This is a summary of the doctrine of Christ, which as Christians we are to believe, and of which our baptism signifies and seals the belief. And it is a sin, and a shame, that many who have been baptized, and are called Christians, know little of these things. They are certainly great things; and we should labour to understand them, and to be rooted and established in the belief of them, and to feel the power of them in our souls. By baptism we were *delivered into this form of doctrine,*[†] as into a mould, and should labour, *from our hearts, to obey it.* Children should betimes be trained in the knowledge of these things; and taught to prefer the superlative excellency of this knowledge of Christ Jesus above any other knowledge whatsoever.

(2.) Our consent to him in all his appointed offices. Faith is the act of the will, as well as of the understanding. This great doctrine, that *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,*[‡] is not only a *faithful saying*, to be assented to, but *worthy of all acceptation*, to be embraced with the greatest affection. Peter said, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God:* (and considering Christ's present state of humiliation, which was a veil to his glory, it was a very great word :) there is the *assenting* act of faith. Thomas said, *My Lord and my God:* (and it was the triumph of his faith over a prevailing unbelief :) there is the *consenting* act of faith. It is not enough to believe that Christ is *Lord, and God*, but we must take him to be our *Lord, and our God*. More particularly, in baptism we are sealed, and delivered up to Christ,

[1.] As our *Prophet*, to teach and instruct us.

He is the *great Prophet* who was promised to the fathers, (Deut. xviii. 15.) and in the fulness of time *he came from God, a teacher.*[‡] He taught a while, in person, and he still teacheth by his word and Spirit; hath (if I may so speak) set up a great school, and he calls upon all *to learn of him.* By baptism we are entered into that school. And (by the way) if parents commonly enter their little children, at what school they please, before they are able to choose for themselves, why may they not enter them into Christ's school; who is the teacher of hearts, and can instil his instructions into the soul, earlier than we are aware of? Christ teacheth the *Σοφία—the rudiments;* (Heb. v. 12.) and those who say that he will not teach little ones, reproach our Master, as if he were the worse for going to heaven; for on earth he invited *little children* to him.[‡]

Baptism draws us off from all other teachers who stand in opposition to Christ, or in competition with him. Carnal reason, and corrupt understanding, governed by the dictates of a perverse rebellious will, and unsanctified affections,

must be disclaimed. Instructions must not be taken from the evil examples of the world, and the prevailing customs of the times. These teachers must be renounced. On the contrary, baptism devotes us to the teaching of Jesus Christ: one who is able to teach us, and as willing as he is able. It placeth us at *wisdom's gates*; sets us at *the feet of Christ*, there to receive his word. And it is the fittest place for us. As baptized Christians, we are the disciples, i. e. the scholars, of Christ. *We call him Master, and we say well, for so he is.*[‡] The proper faculty of the soul, resigned to Christ as our prophet, is the understanding; which must be submitted to the commanding truth of all divine revelations, how mysterious soever.* Christ is a master, whose dictates are to be received with implicit faith, without dispute. How happy were it, could we live under the power of this engagement, or behave as Christ's scholars; observant of our Master, attentive to his instructions, affectionate to our school-fellows, concerned for the credit of our school, and still following on to know the Lord.

[2.] As our Priest, to atone for us and to save us. He is a Priest for ever, and *such an High Priest as became us.*[‡] Were we but better acquainted with the mysteries of Christ's priestly office, we should see, and seeing admire, the singular propriety and beauty of it. Baptism is our subscription to the mediatorship of the Lord Jesus; it seals our approbation of, and consent to, those methods, which infinite wisdom hath taken to redeem a guilty world by a crucified Saviour. In this ordinance then, we are resigned and given up to Christ,

(1.) As a Mediator of reconciliation: quitting our confidence in any righteousness of our own, for the satisfaction of divine justice; and enrolling ourselves among the ransomed of the Lord, who profess to owe all their comforts, and all their hopes, to the blood of Jesus, and to receive all, as flowing to them in that stream. In baptism *we receive the atonement,* (Rom. v. 11.) and it is a rich receiving; which makes us unspeakably happy, and without which we should be eternally miserable. (2.) As a Mediator of intercession; renouncing other intercessors, and relying on Christ, as our only Advocate with the Father, who *appears for us*, and pleads for us. We have a cause to be tried, and baptism admits us as Christ's clients, and interests us in his skill and faithfulness, in the management of that great affair.

We thereby also engage to put all our services into his hands, to be perfumed with the incense of his own intercession, and so presented to the Father. In baptism, our names are engraved upon the breastplate of this great High Priest, *who, as the forerunner, is for us entered.* On this the apostle builds his

† Rom. vi. 17. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 15. ‡ John iii. 2. ‡ Matt. xix. 14.

* John xiii. 13. ‡ Oportet discentem credere. ‡ Heb. vii. 25.

assurance of the ability of Christ to save unto the uttermost, that *he ever lives to make intercession*, Heb. vii. 25. And what a source of comfort is this, to all those who sincerely abide by their baptismal covenant, that Christ himself is, and will be, their High Priest; so that all the privileges, which flow from his atonement and intercession, are theirs!

[3.] As our *King*, to rule us. *He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour*, Acts v. 31. *A Priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace is between them both.*^b Baptism is an oath of allegiance to Christ, as our Saviour Prince. The children of professing parents are born within this allegiance, (as our law expresses it,) and are therefore to be baptized, as Christ's free-born subjects, and in ratification of their engagements.

(1.) In baptism we are put under the *power* of Christ's government; oblige ourselves to bear faith and true allegiance to King Jesus, and cordially to adhere to the authority and interests of his kingdom; renouncing all other rule and dominion, and engaging religiously to observe all his laws and injunctions, how contrary soever to our own corrupt wills and affections. In baptism we take the yoke of Christ upon us, and profess ourselves *willing*, not only in the day of his *grace*, to be made *happy* by him, but in the *day of his power*,^c to be made holy by him. This is to kiss the Son, as it is expressed, Ps. ii. 12. as an expression of cordial and affectionate allegiance. (2.) In baptism we are put under the *protection* of Christ's government. Where we pay allegiance we expect protection; and shall not here be disappointed, for if the *Lord* be our *Judge, our Lawgiver, and our King, he will save us*, Isa. xxxiii. 22. Christ's subjects may and must depend upon his love and care, as their guard and defence against the enemies of their souls. In baptism we come under his wings; quitting dependence upon the creature, as a false, deceitful shelter. We *appoint to ourselves one head*, as the prophet speaks, (Hos. i. 11.) i. e. own and submit to his headship.

Thus stands the covenant relation between Christ and believers, of which baptism is a seal; which is in short thus; *My beloved is mine, and I am his.*^d Christ doth, in this ordinance, seriously make over himself to us to be ours, on condition we are sincerely his; which we therein profess and oblige ourselves to be.

3. We are baptized *in (or into) the name of the Holy Ghost*; the third person in the blessed Trinity.

When those Ephesians, mentioned Acts xix. 2, 3. confessed, that they had not so much as heard whether there were an Holy Ghost, it was asked with wonder, *Unto what then were ye baptized?* implying, that the believing, consenting acknowledgment of the Holy Ghost is essential to Christian baptism.

For herein, as well as in the former particulars, are required, both our *assent* and our *consent*.

(1.) Our *assent* to the truth of the Scripture revelation concerning the Holy Ghost. Particularly,

[1.] Concerning the divinity of the Holy Ghost, which is more than intimated in this institution; and, [2.] Concerning his agency, in carrying on the work of our redemption, and completing the undertaking of Christ. That it is the Holy Spirit who indited the Scriptures, which are both the seed and the food of the new creature; so that all the benefits which flow to the church in general, and to believers in particular, from the word, (and these are neither few nor small,) come originally from the Holy Ghost. And, who works grace, and carries on that work, in the souls of believers; in a free manner, as the wind bloweth where it listeth, yet according to the election of grace. Of this, in baptism we declare our belief, in opposition to those proud opinions, which by making self all in all, make nothing at all, or next to nothing, of the Spirit. This is a truth perhaps as little thought of as any part of the baptismal profession, though as material as any.

(2.) Our *consent* to stand in a covenant relation to the Holy Ghost:

[1.] As our Sanctifier: to change our nature, conquer our corruptions, quicken our graces, and make us meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. By baptism we engage to submit to his sanctifying influences and operations, and give up ourselves to him, to be wrought up by him into a meetness for glory. We promise not to quench but to encourage, not to resist but to comply with, his workings; and for this purpose to attend upon those ordinances, which are instituted as means of sanctification, and by which the Spirit ordinarily works: desiring, and designing, to be sanctified by them, and waiting upon the Spirit for success.

[2.] As our Teacher. The Spirit is given to teach doctrines to be known and believed, and duties to be known and practised; and our baptismal covenant engageth us to receive, and submit to, these teachings. To receive with meekness (the meekness of the understanding, and the meekness of the will) that which the Spirit gives in to us. To welcome his remembrances and admonitions; and to receive the teachings of his word, not only in the *light* of them into our heads, but in the *love* of them into our hearts.

[3.] As our Guide: to show us the way in which we should go, and to lead us in it. It is the character of all the children of God, that they are led by the Spirit of God, Rom. viii. 14. By baptism, we yield up ourselves to that conduct, with David's prayer, *Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness.*^e The Spirit guides, out of the way of wick-

^b Zech. vi. 13.

^c Psalm cx. 3.

^d Cant. ii. 16.

^e Psalm cxliii. 10.

edness, the paths of the destroyer, into the way everlasting: and by baptism we are obliged to follow, humbly, closely, cheerfully, and fully. To walk, not after the flesh, as other Gentiles walk, but after the spirit, is what all are obliged to, who are in Christ Jesus.

[4.] As our Comforter. He is promised as such, John xiv. 16. (*Παρακλητος*,) either our *Advocate* and *Intercessor* within us; and as such by baptism we become his clients, and oblige ourselves to take his advice, and trust to his management: or our *Comforter*; and as such we receive him; depending upon him for that solid, satisfying comfort, which we have foolishly sought, and may despair ever to find, in the creature. Whatever disquiets us, we are engaged by our baptism to wait upon the Spirit for our comfort, in his own way.

In a word, our Lord Jesus, in this ordinance, doth in effect say to us, as he did to the disciples when he breathed on them, (John xx. 22.) *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*. And our restipulation is something like the blessed Virgin's submission to the power of the Spirit, (Luke i. 38.) *Behold the servant of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word*.

And thus I have endeavoured to open the nature of this ordinance; the meaning of this service. And may we not from hence fetch matter of lamentation, that of the many who are baptized, and the many who bring their children to be baptized, there are so few who rightly understand what they do, or what was done to them? And if this be the nature of baptism, however to a carnal eye it may seem a mean thing, yet it is truly great. That which puts a value upon the wax and the seal, is the worth of the inheritance thereby conveyed. Baptism cannot be a little thing, when it is into names so great, as those of the *Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

HAVING opened at large the nature of baptism, we come next to inquire, to whom it is to be administered? And we may take some general rules in answer to this question, from what hath already been said, in opening the nature and institution of the ordinance. Our Master hath directed to baptize all nations; which easily affords this undisputed rule, that difference of nation makes no difference in Christianity. Greek or Jew, Barbarian or Scythian, people of all nations, are alike welcome to Christ upon gospel terms.

In a protestant nation, little needs be said to expose the folly of the church of Rome, in administering the ordinance of baptism to things senseless and inanimate; as bells, and oars, and the like. When the apostles are bid to preach the gospel to *every creature*, it must be restrained to human creatures; the chief of the visible creation.

1. Baptism, we have found, is an ordinance of Christ's mediatorial kingdom; therefore all who pertain to that kingdom are to be baptized. It is a part of our *magna charta*, which every subject may claim the benefit of, and plead an interest in, unless by any forfeiture he deprive himself of the privilege of it. It belongs not to the internal, but external, administration of this kingdom; is an ordinance of the visible church, and pertains therefore to these who are visible members of the church.

2. Baptism is a seal of the covenant of grace; and therefore belongs to those who are in that covenant, (at least by profession,) and to none other. As for a real and saving covenant interest, we cannot judge of it; it is a secret not belonging to us. In the external administration, we must proceed by a judgment of charity, upon a plausible profession. And according to these rules,

FIRST. All those who seriously profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are to be baptized.

Be they heathens, *who have not known God*, or Jews or Turks, *who have not obeyed the gospel of Christ*, if they will renounce their delusions, and willingly and deliberately embrace the Christian religion, they are welcome to this ordinance. I say willingly embrace Christianity, for it is a vile abuse of the ordinance, and a contradiction to the constitution of Christ's kingdom, to force people to baptism, and by it to Christianity, by outward violence and compulsion. This was the method the Spaniards took in converting the Indians, of which they boast so much. Christ will have all his subjects *willing in the day of his power*.

This required profession supposeth a competency of knowledge; and consists in a declared consent to the terms of the covenant; in which the judgment can be made only by the outward appearance. The believing consent is in the heart, and that falls not under our cognizance; it is *with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation*. In the primitive times, when Christianity was to be planted in a world made up of Jews and heathens, this profession was previously required; though it appears not in what degree of explicitness. Whether every individual of the three thousand baptized, Acts ii. 41. did make a particular confession of his faith, or whether their cheerful submission to the ordinance, upon a public declaration of the nature and obligations of it, sufficed, as an implicit consent, is uncer-

tain. The Eunuch's confession (Acts viii. 37.) was short, that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*, which was then the *present truth*. And perhaps Christianity has gained little, by the lengthening and multiplying of creeds; which, it may justly be feared, have caused more contention than they have cured.

SECOND. The infants of those who are in covenant with God, and are themselves members of the visible church, are likewise to be baptized.

As far as the records of the New Testament go, most were baptized upon the former title: and good reason for it; the Christian church was then in the planting. And hence ariseth a mistake, like that of supposing that because, upon the first conquest of a kingdom, an actual consent to the prince's sovereignty, by taking the oaths of allegiance, is justly required, as the condition of partaking of the privilege of his protection, therefore it must needs be so, after the government is settled; and that none were to be reckoned his subjects, but those who testified this explicit consent; whereas it is agreed, by the law of all nations, that those who are born of the king's subjects, and in the king's dominions, are within the allegiance of the king, and entitled to the privileges of his subjects.

And here, I profess, I enter upon a very unpleasant part of my province, (for I take no delight in opposing,) but there is no avoiding it; the truth once delivered to the saints, and entailed on them, and their seed, must be contended for. But because the ground is rough, I promise to tread lightly, and to hasten over it as fast as I can: and the rather, because so much has been said and written, by so many learned and able divines, in defence of infant baptism, which yet remains unanswered, that to be large upon the subject, would be but (*actum agere*) waste labour. I am asking for the *good old way*, and do not covet new lights.

The people we have occasion to contradict in handling this question, rather assumingly call themselves Baptists, as if there was no baptism, and therefore no Christianity, but amongst them. Call them Antipedobaptists, i. e. such as are against infant baptism; or Anabaptists, i. e. rebaptizers, such as require those who were baptized in infancy to be baptized again; and you call them right.

And as to the persons of this people, I presume not to judge them; yea, I do not doubt that many among them are such as fear God, and are accepted of him. What I myself have seen of Christ among them, I do dearly love and rejoice in; and those who only scruple the baptizing of their own children, but do not condemn infant baptism in general as a nullity, and reproach it as a vanity, though I heartily pity their mistake, I would be very backward to censure them: acknowledging, with Mr. Flavel, that there are difficulties in this controversy, which may puzzle the minds of well-meaning Chris-

tians. But for their way, I must here declare my utter dislike of it: and the rather, because in that short experience I have had of the world, I have observed these things concerning it:

1. That it is a very uncharitable way. For whatever *they do*, I am sure their *tenets do* unchurch and unchristian more than nineteen parts in twenty of the Christian world; and thus dishonour Christ by narrowing his kingdom.

2. That it is a very unnatural way: cutting children off from being parts of their parents; and prohibiting those to partake of their parents' privileges, who unhappily partake of their corruptions. And,

3. That it is generally accompanied with (and therefore probably leads to) other errors. For, not to go so far as Germany, and reflect upon the anabaptists of Munster, it is too plain, that the greater part of the anabaptists of England, at this day, run into extremes directly opposite to each other, and equally distant from the truth as it is in Jesus. And by the way, methinks those who speak so much of free grace, and the unconditionality of the gospel-covenant, should be easily induced to honour free grace by the admission of children under its wings, though incapable of conditioning.

As to the points in question, I shall endeavour with all clearness and brevity to show,

I. What children are to be baptized.

II. What gives them their right to baptism: and,

III. What proof we have of that right.

I. As to the first of these, or what children are to be baptized? I answer,

Not all children promiscuously. If both the parents are out of the visible church, the child is not to be baptized, till it comes to years of understanding: Yet

The children of parents, only one of whom professeth faith in Christ and obedience to him, have a right to baptism; the *unbelieving parent* is so far sanctified by the believing, that the children are *federally holy*, 1 Cor. vii. 14.

Yea, though the parents are not actual members of any particular church, yet, as members of the universal visible church, their serious profession of faith entitles their children to baptism; for (as was showed before) baptism seals our admission, not into any particular, but into the universal, church.

But in case the parents are excommunicated, it seems to me that the children's right is thereby, for the present, suspended; supposing that excommunication to be just.

If both the parents are openly profane and scandalous, so that whatever profession they make, their practice doth notoriously give the lie to it; this amounts to the case of those who are excommunicated. Since such cast out themselves, and it is but a mockery to call them Christians, till they re-

pent, and resolve to amend ; and it doth but harden them in their wickedness, to take their children into the church. Or finally,

If the parents deny the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, or refuse to consent to the covenant of grace, their children are not to be baptized. Those who do not hold the head, have not any title to membership, either for themselves or theirs. In a word, whatever, upon the first disciplining of nations, would have been a bar to a man's own baptism, in the continuation of Christianity, may justly be deemed a bar to the baptism of his children ; and nothing else. As to the

II. Or what it is that gives children a right to baptism, (I mean as the requisite condition of their baptism,) I answer, the visible church-membership of one, or both, of their parents ; i. e. their profession, of faith in Christ, and obedience to him.

It is not the profession or promise of any other person or persons for them, which can entitle children to baptism, except in some extraordinary cases. And therefore I think, to that great question, *Why are children baptized, when, by reason of their tender age, they cannot perform the conditions of the covenant?* the common answer, *Because they promise them by their sureties*, is not at all satisfactory : for unless there be some relation, natural or instituted, between them and their sureties, I see not how the consent of the sureties can either bind or benefit them. And I fear that building the fabric of infant baptism upon so weak a foundation, and erecting a fort so untenable against the adversaries of it, hath given them great advantage. By this reasoning, the infants of Jews, Turks, or Pagans, might be baptized, upon the profession of any Christian, though standing in no relation to them ; which certainly has no foundation in the word of God. I deny not the antiquity, nor in some cases the expediency, of sponsors. In the primitive times, when temptations to apostasy from the Christian faith were frequent and strong, sureties were generally required ; i. e. persons of reputation in the church, who did (1st) testify that they believed the sincerity of the parents' profession ; and that, so far as they were able to judge, they were not likely to apostatize ; and (2d) engage that in case the parents should die, or apostatize, they would themselves take care of the Christian education of the child. But this custom, laudable enough in its rise, hath sadly degenerated in its continuance ; and the children's right to baptism been built so much upon their susception by sponsors, that the parents have been excluded by a law from professing and promising for their own offspring ; which doubtless is a great abuse. If the sureties come in only as witnesses, why are they dealt with as the prime agents ? If they are looked upon as proprietors of, and undertaking for, the children immediately, I see no ground in Scripture for such

a susception, and therefore know not how it can be done in faith. And it is not only depriving parents of their right of dedicating their own children, but it looks too much like releasing them from their obligations to educate them, when the whole care of them is so committed to others : and it is a temptation to neglect their education ; while the sureties are bound to take care of that, which they have no opportunity for, and which they are not induced to, by any natural affection. If it be said that they are the parents' deputies, (the best which can be made of it,) then certainly there should be some word or action appointed, which might, at least, imply such a deputation ; and the parents should be permitted, some way or other, to signify their assent and consent to the engagement of the sureties ; whereas the canon expressly provides, *that the parents be not urged to be present* : or the sureties should make some mention of the parents ; and their transacting not be expressly said to be *in the name of the child*. At least it should be left to the parent's choice, whether he will make a deputy or not ; whereas, on the contrary, the canon enjoins, *that no parent be admitted to answer as godfather for his own child*.

Having thus taken infant baptism off the wrong foundation, we fix it upon the right, i. e. the parents' profession of faith in Christ, and obedience to him. A plausible profession, not contradicted by evident ignorance, or wickedness.

In case of the death, or necessary absence, of the parents, it sufficeth, that this profession be credibly attested by witnesses, knowing the parents, and known to the church : (if the minister and congregation be not otherwise satisfied :) and in such a case of necessity, it is very requisite that some person related to the child, or to whom the care of it is committed, should undertake for its Christian education. But if the parents (one or both) be living, it is proper that they should make an express declaration of their belief of the gospel, their consent to the covenant of grace, and their desire to have the child brought into that covenant. This fixes the title upon the right ground, and obligeth those who are most fit to be obliged. This parents most certainly are ; because,

(1.) They have the greatest interest in their children. Who so fit to have the disposition of any thing, as the right owner ? When the sponsors present a child to God, they give what is not their own—and what thanks have they ?

(2.) Parents have also the greatest power over their children : a power, during infancy, *to choose and to refuse*, Numb. xxx. 3—5. When the sponsors transact in the child's name, they would do well to consider, *by what authority they do these things, and who gave them that authority*. And,

Finally, The covenant is, and ever hath been, externally administered to infants in the right of their

parents. *A God to thee, and to thy seed after thee,* (Gen. xvii. 7.) not to thee, and to the seed of a stranger, whom thou canst but pick up, and circumcise, and turn home again. A true domestic owner of a child, who hath power to choose or refuse for him, may perhaps also be admitted to bring that child to baptism; because his interest in, and power over, such a child, is nearly tantamount to that of a parent. As Abraham circumcised all who were born in his house, and bought with his money, Gen. xvii. 13, 28. We proceed now,

III. To prove the right of the infant seed of believing parents to baptism.

And here, to make some amends for the unpleasantness of disputing, it is no small pleasure to be the infants' advocate; to plead for those who cannot plead for themselves. Our law favours infants, and so doth our gospel.

For clearing what follows, some things are needful to be premised: as,

1. That consequences from Scripture are good proofs. The Scriptures were written for rational creatures. And is not Scripture reasoning the sense and meaning of Scripture? If the premises are plain Scripture truths, and granted, they are unworthy to be disputed with who deny the conclusion.

2. That all truths are not alike plain in Scripture. Some things are spoken of more fully, others more sparingly. The Scriptures were written for those who have them, and therefore they speak sparingly of the state of heathens, who have them not. They were written for those who are of ability to use them, and therefore speak sparingly of the state of infants, who are not yet of that ability. And the New Testament speaks less of those things which are more fully spoken of in the Old Testament; and which therefore were well known when the New was written. And infant baptism was not then controverted; for the Jews, to whom the gospel was first sent, understood it well enough.

3. That though the point of infant baptism may seem not so great a point to be contended for, yet the grounds on which it stands, and which they strike at who deny it, are very considerable, and of great moment.

These things premised, I shall mention just a few of the arguments.

ARGUMENT I. The infants of believing parents are in covenant with God, and therefore have a right to the initiating seal of that covenant.

When I say they are in covenant, understand me of the external administration of the covenant of grace, not of that which is internal. To the Jews pertained *the covenant and the promises*,^b and yet with many of them God was not well pleased. Baptism,

as was showed before, belongs to the external administration. What I mean is this; the promises of the covenant are conditionally sealed to them, viz. if, as they become capable, they agree to the terms to which they are by their baptism obliged. And what more can be said of the baptism of adults' for the seal of the internal administration to true believers, is *the spirit of promise*.^c

The consequent of this argument is seldom denied, viz. that if infants are in covenant, they have a right to the seal. If the crown devolves upon an infant, he hath a right to the ceremony of coronation: and who can forbid water to those who are in the Christian covenant? Yet it doth not therefore follow, that these infants have a right to the Lord's supper: because in the two sacraments, though the thing signified be the same, the manner of signification is different. The Lord's supper is an ordinance in which the partaker must be active, but in baptism purely passive, (which therefore is still, and in our language, spoken of in the passive voice,) as if designed, purposely, for the benefit of infants. Under the Old Testament, infants did partake of circumcision, but not of the passover.

The antecedent, therefore, is that which especially requires proof, viz. that the children of professing parents are in covenant with God, i. e. come under the external administration of the covenant of grace.

And I prove it by four steps;

1. It is possible that they may be in covenant.

2. It is probable that they should be in covenant.

3. It is certain that they were in covenant.

4. It is therefore certain that they are in covenant.

1. It is very possible that they may be in covenant with God.

I see no contradiction in the thing itself. The great objection insisted upon is, that they cannot restipulate, or declare their consent to the covenant: as if God's thoughts and ways of mercy were not infinitely above ours; or as if divine grace, which acts by prerogative, could not covenant with those who are not yet able to express their consent. If God made a covenant with the earth, (Gen. ix. 13.) and instituted a seal of that covenant, surely infants may be *fœderati*, though incapable of being *fœderantes*; i. e. may be happily taken into covenant, though not covenanters.

A right understanding of the nature of the covenant would clear this: viz. that God is the principal agent, and works in us that which he requires of us. *I will put my laws in their hearts*, so runs the covenant, Heb. viii. 10. Hence it is called *διαθηκη*, which signifies as well a *testament* as a *covenant*: and if it be disputed, whether it be possible that infants should be taken into covenant, yet I hope it is

^b Rom. ix. 4.

^c Eph. i. 13.

past dispute, that they may have benefit by a testament.

To me it is very clear, that infants are capable of covenant relations, and of receiving and enjoying covenant privileges and benefits; not only the external, but the internal. Hence we not only read of those who were sanctified from the womb, but are assured, that John the Baptist *was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb*, Luke i. 15. And indeed, if children are capable of corruption, it would be very hard upon them to say, that they are incapable of satisfaction. That would be to give the first Adam a larger power to kill, than the second Adam hath to quicken. In a word, none deny the possibility of the salvation of infants, and if it is possible that they may be saved, I am sure it is possible that they may be in covenant with God.

2. It is highly probable that they should be in covenant with God: for,

(1.) Infants are parts of their parents. The very law of nature accounts them so during their infancy, as appears by the concurring law of nations. Hence they are said to be *in the loins of their parents*, (Heb. vii. 10.) and in them to act and receive. The propriety of parents in their children is greater than in any thing else. Now, in the day when we give up ourselves to the Lord, we lay all that we have at his feet; and pass over all our rights and interests to him; and our children among the rest. God therefore takes it as a notorious invasion of his prerogative, that his people should devote their children to another god; *Thou hast taken thy sons, and thy daughters, whom thou hast born unto me, to cause them to pass through the fire*, Ezek. xvi. 20, 21.

(2.) All God's other covenants, which he hath made with men, have taken in the seed of the covenanters; which makes it highly probable, that the covenant of grace should be so ordered. The covenant of works was made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; for we all feel the sad effects of his transgression. The covenant which God made with Noah, was made with him and his seed after him, (Gen. ix. 9.) of which we have still the comfortable experience. And the covenant of grace is paralleled with that covenant, Isa. liv. 9.

The covenant of peculiarity made with Israel took in their seed; and therefore, at the solemnity of entering into this covenant, express mention is made of the admission of their *little ones*, Deut. xxix. 11—13. Though they were not capable of actual covenanting, yet they came in the right of their

parents. And that covenant, though (taken strictly) no part of the covenant of grace, yet was a remarkable type of it.*

The covenant of priesthood made with Phinehas, and the covenant of royalty made with David, included their seed: and Christians are kings and priests unto God.

(3.) The God of heaven hath, upon all occasions, expressed a particular kindness for little children. Nineveh was spared out of regard to the little children it contained: and we scarcely find, in all the gospel history, such an instance of the tender affection of the Lord Jesus, as in his reception of the *little ones* who were brought to him; whom he *took up in his arms, and blessed*, Mark x. 13, 14.

3. It is certain that they were in covenant.

They were reckoned among those, *to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the promises*.⁴ It doth not very evidently appear in Scripture records, how the covenant was administered in the first ages of the world; but *then* it was administered to families. Family religion was then the face of religion: which puts it beyond reasonable doubt, that children were within the covenant. It is observable, that, in the patriarchal ages, professors were called *sons of God*, (Gen. vi. 2.) supposed to be the posterity of Seth as such. The profession of religion was *then* entailed upon families: a manifest indication of the covenant right of children, and of the designed method of the administration of the covenant, by propagating a profession.

The first clear manifestation of the covenant of grace, is in the transactions between God and Abraham, (Gen. xvii.) and it is very plain, that there the seed of the covenanter was taken into covenant. So it runs, (v. 7, &c.) *thee, and thy seed after thee*; and it is repeated with an observable emphasis, *a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee*. To thy seed after thee, for thy sake; as appears, (Deut. iv. 37.) *because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them*. Upon Abraham's believing consent to the covenant, all his posterity was graciously admitted into the bonds of the covenant. Ishmael was therefore immediately circumcised as a child of Abraham; and Isaac afterwards: and so all the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, *to whom pertained the adoption*, was circumcised, as the seal of that adoption, and that covenant.

That the covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii.) was not a covenant of works, the same with that made with Adam in innocency, is too evident to require

* The Israelites, throughout their generations, were undoubtedly under the *Abrahamic*, as well as the *Mosaic*, covenant; the former not having been disannulled by the latter, Gal. iii. 17. And indeed, on the former, all those hopes, which in fact obtained amongst pious Israelites in after-ages, of the pardon of presumptuous sins on repentance, and of happiness beyond death, must have been founded; since for neither of these did the Sinai cove-

nant make any provision. And the last verse of the passage quoted above from Deut. xxix. plainly intimates, or rather asserts, that the covenant there referred to, and into which *little ones* were admitted, was the *Abrahamic* as well as the *Mosaic*. See *Towgood's Baptism of Infants a reasonable Service*, Intr. p. 5.

⁴ Rom. ix. 4.

proof; and that it was not the covenant of peculiarity, but a pure gospel covenant of grace, will appear, if we consider,

(1.) That the grand article of this covenant is that which comprehends the whole covenant of grace, and all the riches of that covenant, viz. that *God will be a God to us*; which doth eminently include all happiness. What can a soul need, or desire more, than a special interest in God? Even the glory and happiness of heaven itself, (which is certainly conveyed by no other covenant than the covenant of grace,) is thus set forth, (Rev. xxi. 3.) *The Lord himself shall be their God.*

(2.) That circumcision, the seal of this covenant, is said to be *the seal of the righteousness which is by faith*, (Rom. iv. 11.) which must necessarily be by the covenant of grace.

(3.) That the blessing, of which the Gentiles are made partakers, by being brought into the covenant of grace, is called *the blessing of Abraham*, (Gal. iii. 14.) i. e. the blessing insured to Abraham and his seed. Those who deny infants to be in this covenant, deny them the blessing of Abraham; (for he had it to himself and his seed;) and so, as much as in them lies, cut them off from salvation: but it is well that the unbelief of man doth not make the righteousness of God of none effect.

(4.) That the covenant of grace, in the New-Testament revelation of it, is expressly distinguished, not from the covenant made with Abraham, (for it was the same with that,) but from the covenant which God made with Israel, *in the day when he took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt*, Heb. viii. 8—10. Now, that was the covenant of peculiarity; the Sinai covenant; which Sinai covenant is, in like manner, manifestly distinguished from the promise made to Abraham, which the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul, Gal. iii. 17. compared v. 8. Now, we build the covenant rights of infants upon the promise made to Abraham, the father of the faithful.

(5.) If the covenant with Abraham was only the covenant of peculiarity, and circumcision only a seal of the promise of the land of Canaan, how came it that all proselytes, of what nation soever, even *the strangers*, were to be circumcised; though not being of any of the tribes, they had no part or lot in the land of Canaan? The extending the seal of circumcision to proselyted strangers, and to their seed, was a plain indication, that the New-Testament administration of the covenant of grace would reach, not the covenanters only, but their seed. Now, baptism comes in the room of circumcision, as appears by comparing Col. ii. 11, 12. and whatever is objected against children's capacity, of being taken into covenant by baptism, doth very much reflect upon the wisdom of God, in taking them into the same covenant by circumcision.

From all this it appears, that the covenant with Abraham was a covenant of grace; and that the seed of believers were taken into that covenant: and therefore, that the children of professing parents were formerly in covenant with God. I am now to show,

4. That it is therefore certain that they are still in covenant.

This brings the argument home: and, I think may be made out without much difficulty. For,

1. This follows from what has been said on the former head. If they *were* in covenant, unless evidence can be produced to prove their ejection, we ought to conclude, that they are still in covenant. Our opponents call upon us to prove, by express Scripture, that infants are in covenant: but certainly, having proved, even to demonstration, that they were in covenant, it lies upon them to show *where* and *when* they were thrown out of covenant: which they were never yet able to evince, no, not by the least footstep of a consequence. It is as clear as the sun at noon-day, that the seed of believers had a right to the initiating seal of the covenant; and how came they to lose that right?

For the clearing of this consequence, it is to be considered,

(1.) That the design of the New-Testament dispensation was to enlarge, and not to straiten, the manifestations of divine grace; to make the door wider, and not to make it narrower. But if the seed of believers who were taken into covenant, and had a right to the initiating seal under the Old Testament, are now turned out of covenant, and deprived of that right, the times of the law were more full of grace than the times of the gospel; which is absurd. Can it be imagined, that the Gentiles are, in respect of their children, in a worse state than they were under the law? *Then*, if a Gentile was proselyted, and taken into covenant, his seed was taken in with him; and is that privilege denied now? Is the seed of Abraham's faith in a worse condition than the seed of Abraham's flesh?

(2.) That there needed not any express declaration in the Scriptures concerning this. The not repealing a law, is enough to satisfy us of the continuance of it. It was said in the Old-Testament revelation of the covenant of grace, that God would be *a God to believers, and their seed*. *When* or *where* was this repealed? The gospel being made known to the Jews first, they knew well enough, by the tenor of the covenant with Abraham, that their children were to be taken in. What poor encouragement would it have been for a Jew to turn Christian, if his children, who before were in covenant, and were visible church members, must, upon the father's becoming a Christian, be (*ipso facto*) thrown out, and put to stand upon the same uncomfortable level, and at the same dismal distance from God, as the children

heathens and infidels! A tender father would have said, "This is very hard, and not agreeable to that comfortable prospect which the prophets, in the name of God, have so often given, of the days of the Messiah, the enlargement of the church, the bringing of the sons from far, and the daughters from the ends of the earth, and the owning of the offspring as a seed which the Lord hath blessed.*"

(3.) It is worth observing, that the gospel church is called the *Israel of God*, (Gal. vi. 16.) and the gospel covenant is said to be made with the *house of Israel, and the house of Judah*, (Heb. viii. 8.) and those who had been *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, when effectually called to Christianity, are said to be *made nigh*, Eph. ii. 12, 13. All which intimates, that the same privileges, for substance, which God's Israel had under the Old-Testament dispensation, do now pertain to the gospel church. Now one special privilege which the Old-Testament Israel had, was, that their infant seed was taken into covenant with God: which privilege must certainly remain to the New-Testament church, till there appears some evidence of its being cancelled. It is the apostle's inference from a long discourse, *We are Abraham's seed*, Gal. iii. 29.

2. There is not only no evidence in the New Testament, of the repealing and vacating of this privilege, but an abundant evidence of the confirmation and continuation of it, in that remarkable scripture so often pleaded for infant baptism, (Acts ii. 39.) *For the promise is to you, and to your children*. The Jews had brought the blood of Christ upon themselves and their children: Now, said they, what shall we do, who have thus entailed a curse upon our posterity? Why, repent, and ye shall have an entailed promise. Peter is there inviting and encouraging the converted Jews to repent, and, by baptism, to dedicate themselves to Christ Jesus, and so to come under the evangelical dispensation of the covenant of grace. The privileges of that covenant are said to be, remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost; i. e. justification and sanctification; pardon of past sin, and grace to go and sin no more; which are the two principal and most inclusive promises of the new covenant. Now this promise is *to you, and to your children*; which doth as plainly take in the seed of the covenanters, as the covenant with Abraham did, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*. And the Jews, no doubt, understood it so; such a hint being enough to them who were brought up in the knowledge of the promise made unto the fathers. It was as much as to say, "For your encouragement to come into covenant by baptism, know, that it runs still as it did, *to you, and to your children*: not only your own lives, but your children's too, shall be put into the lease; so that if they

pay the rent, and do the service, they shall share the benefit of it."

3. I do not see how else to understand those scriptures which speak of the salvation of whole families, upon the believing of the masters of those families, but thus, that all their children are thereupon brought into covenant, unless they are of age to refuse, and do enter their dissent; if so, their blood be upon their own head; but if infants, though they be not of age to consent, yet not being of age to dissent, their parents covenanting for them shall be accepted as their act and deed.

Lydia's heart was opened, and she was baptized and her household, Acts xvi. 15. The promise of salvation made to the jailer was, that upon his believing, his house should be saved; (Acts xvi. 31.) *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ* (πιστευσον;) do thou believe, and thou shalt be saved, i. e. taken into a covenant of salvation, and thy house: which, I think, may be explained by what Christ said to Zaccheus upon his believing, (Luke xix. 9.) *This day is salvation come to this house*; i. e. the covenant is externally administered to the whole family; as appears by the following words, *forasmuch as he also is the son of Abraham*. The coming of salvation to his house, is grounded upon his relation to Abraham, and consequently his interest in Abraham's covenant, *I will be a God to thee, and thy seed*: which Christ hereby intimates that he came to confirm and ratify, not to disannul. Apply this to Paul's words to the jailer, and the sense is plain; Believe in Christ, and salvation shall come to thy house: forasmuch as the believing jailer also is a son of Abraham. See Rom. iv. 11, 12, 16. It is further observable in this story of the jailer, that Paul and Silas preached to all that were in his house; (v. 32.) probably many of them not of his family; (perhaps the prisoners;) but the expression is altered, when the writer comes to speak of baptizing them, (v. 33.) where it is not said, that all in his house were baptized, but *he and all his*; his little ones, no doubt, for the sake of their relation to him; and that *straightway* upon his believing. What is added in the 34th verse, *he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house*, cannot be seriously objected to this, by any who can read, and will observe the original; which is, *he having believed in God, rejoiced in (or through, or with) his whole house*.* Though, if we allow the believing to be spoken of his whole house, it may only signify, that they were all by baptism enrolled amongst visible believers; and so infants are. And we read of the baptizing of whole families, besides those of Lydia and the jailer; and it is hard to imagine that there were no infants in any of them. It is more reasonable to suppose that there were, and that they were taken into covenant with their parents. By all this it is

* Isaiah lxi. 9.

* Ηγαλλισασατο πανοικη περιτεμενης το θεω. He exulted, (so the Syriac,) and all the children of his house, in the faith of God.

evident, that the children of believing parents are in covenant with God, and have a right to baptism, the seal of that covenant.

It will not be amiss, before we proceed to another argument, briefly to inquire into the reasons, why God is pleased thus to take children into covenant with their parents? And, doubtless, he doth this,

(1.) To magnify the riches of his grace as diffusive of itself; conveyed, not as in a small vessel, the waters of which will soon be spent, but as in a full stream, which runs with continued supplies. The covenant of grace is a *river of pleasures*.^f Grace is hereby glorified as free and preventing, i. e. *grace*; and here it appears, that the relation between us and God is founded, not on our choice, but his; *we love him, because he first loved us*.^g In the providential kingdom, it is mentioned as an especial instance of the divine goodness, that God takes care of the young ones of his creatures, Ps. cxlvii. 9. So is his love manifested in the kingdom of grace. Taking children into covenant, is an encouraging instance of the goodness of his nature, and his swiftness to show mercy. David lays a peculiar emphasis upon this, in his admiring acknowledgments of God's goodness to him, (2 Sam. vii. 19.) *Thou hast spoken concerning thy servant's house, for a great while to come. Kindness to the seed, for the parent's sake, is therefore called, the kindness of God*, 2 Sam. ix. 3. When the covenant is so ordered, that the *seed* of the covenanters is thus *established for ever*, though we should fail in *singing the mercies of the Lord, yet the heavens themselves will praise his wonders*, Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4. compare v. 1, 5.

•(2.) That the quickening influences of the second Adam may bear some analogy, in the method of communication, to the killing influences of the first Adam. There is a death propagated, and entailed upon our seed, by Adam's breach of the covenant of works; and therefore God would have some kind of life (though not a life of grace, yet a life of privilege) entailed upon our seed likewise, *by the bringing in of the better hope*; that so, within the visible church, the remedy might be as extensive as the disease. By native corruption, which we are all *born in*, sin is lodged in the heart; but by their native covenant right, which the seed of believers are all *born to*, the sin-offering is laid at the door. (I refer to one probable reading of Gen. iv. 7.)

(3.) That the hearts of true believers may hereby be comforted and encouraged in reference to their seed. It is a great inducement to come into this covenant, when it is thus entailed upon our children.

An estate, *in fee*, to a man and his heirs, is reckoned of more than twice the value of an estate for life. Though a man cannot be certain that his heir may not abuse or forfeit it, yet it is desirable to leave

it to him. This indeed is, in a manner, the only sufficient ground that believers have to build their faith upon, in reference to the salvation of their children dying in infancy; which, to one who knows the worth of a soul, is no small thing.

(4.) *That he might seek a godly seed*,^h (Hebr. *a seed of God*,) that his church might be built up in a seed of saints. Thus does God provide for a succession, by a timely taking hold of the rising generation, and marking them for his own, as born within the pale; that the promise may be made good to Christ, (Ps. lxxxix. 36.) *His seed shall endure for ever. A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation*. It is in consideration of the deceitfulness of the human heart; (which if left at liberty, is very unapt to choose the good;) and to lead the young ones as they spring, by these early cords of love, into the bond of the covenant: that this previous inducement may help to turn the scale of the fluctuating, wavering soul, and so determine the choice on God's side; which would be much more hazarded if it were left wholly to an adult choice. Infant baptism is intended to pave the way to early piety. The profession of Christianity is a step towards the truth of it; and may prevail to introduce it; as a plea with God to give us his grace, and an argument with ourselves, to receive and submit to it. However, Christ is hereby honoured in the world, and *his name made great among the nations*. This is one of the fortifications of Christ's kingdom, by which it is secured from the gates of hell; and the design of the powers of darkness, to cut off the line of succession, and *wear out the saints*, is frustrated. Thus, in times of general corruption, doth God preserve a *tenth, which shall return, and shall be eaten even the holy seed*.ⁱ During the prevalence of the papal kingdom in the western church, though infant baptism was quite misgrounded, and baptism itself almost lost, in the great corruptions which stained its purity, yet, the preserving of the ashes, gave rise to another phoenix. Thus, it is the will of God to preserve the invisible church in the visible, as wheat in the chaff; and as the power of godliness, at the first planting of the church, brought in the form, so the form, in restoring the church, brings in the power.

So much for the first argument, which is the main hinge; and the consideration of this will serve for the confirmation of the rest; which I shall therefore but just touch upon.

ARGUMENT II. All who ought to be admitted visible church members, ordinarily, ought to be baptized; but the infants of professing parents ought to be admitted visible church members, and therefore, ordinarily, they ought to be baptized.

That baptism is the door of admission into the

^f Ps xxxvi. 8.

^g 1 John iv. 19.

^h Mal. ii. 15.

ⁱ Isa. vi. 13.

ible church, was showed before; *we are baptized* & *one body*.^k That then which is to be proved, is, that the seed of believers ought to be admitted visible church members; and this has been so frequently and so fully proved, that a hint or two on this head may suffice.

The seed of believers, by God's gracious appointment, under the Old Testament, were to be admitted members of the visible church; and that gracious appointment has never yet been repealed; therefore, they are to be admitted such still. It is clear, that the ceremonial institutions, which were not the accidentals of the Jewish church, are abolished, (they were a *yoke*,) but it is as true, that the essentials remain; though therefore the particular mode of admission be changed, for a special reason, accidental, it doth not therefore follow that infant church membership, which is an essential branch of the constitution, is repealed. If infants be cut off from the body, it is either in judgment or in mercy: not in judgment, for where did they, as infants, commit a forfeiture? not in mercy, for it can neither be a benefit to them, nor to their parents, nor to the church in general. If then professing parents did formerly bear their children to the Lord, why do they not still?

2. Our Master hath expressly told us, that *the church is the kingdom of God*, (Mark x. 15.) i. e. the visible church is the kingdom of God among men, and infants belong to that kingdom. A short view of the story will throw some light on the doctrine of infant baptism, and therefore we will turn aside a little to consider it: and observe in it,

(1.) The faith of the parents, or other friends, who brought the children to Christ. They brought their children—*παιδια*, little children; Luke calls them *βρεφη*—*infants* (the word is used concerning Jesus in the manger). They brought them to Christ, as the great Prophet, to receive his blessing; not, as many others, for the cure of bodily diseases, but for a spiritual blessing. It seems then, that infants are capable of spiritual benefits by Christ: and it is the greatest kindness their parents can do them, to bring them to him by faith and prayer, to receive them. These infants were brought, that Christ might touch them: though infants cannot take hold of Christ, yet that doth not hinder, but that he may take hold of them. Paul reduceth his interest in Christ to this, (Phil. iii. 12.) *For which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus*: and the best of those who have known God, must conclude with a *rather are known of God*. Infants have need of Christ, and Christ hath supplies for infants, and therefore to whom else should they be brought? *he hath the words of eternal life*.

(2.) The fault of the disciples in rebuking those

who brought the children. It is Satan's policy to keep children from Christ; and he doth it, sometimes, under very plausible pretences. The disciples thought it a reflection upon their Master, to trouble him with such clients. We must not think it strange, if we meet with rebukes in the way of our duty: carnal reason, and a misguided zeal, prevail, not only to keep many from coming to Christ themselves, but to put them upon rebuking and hindering others; especially at their first dedication.

(3.) The favour of Christ to them. He was displeased with his disciples (*ηγανακτησε*); he took it very heinously, that they should thus misrepresent him to the world as unkind to little ones; and said, *Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not*. And the reason added is very considerable, *for of such is the kingdom of God*; i. e. his kingdom of grace, or the church (*ουρωω*): not only of those who are disposed as children, for then he might have said the same of a lamb, or a dove, and have ordered those to be brought unto him: the word generally signifies not similitude, but identity; nor can any one instance be found where it excludes the person or thing mentioned. *They that do (ουωω) such things, are worthy of death*; (Rom. i. 32.) doth not that include the things before mentioned? The argument then from this passage plainly stands thus: the question was, Whether infants might be brought to Christ to be blessed by him? By all means, saith Christ, for they are members of the church, and therefore I am concerned to look after them: they belong to the fold, and therefore the Shepherd of the sheep will take care of them. And therefore, not only in compliance with the believing desires of the parents, and in compassion to the infants, but to give a rule to his ministers in all generations of the church, *he took them in his arms, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them*. Thus did he outdo their expectations, and give them more than they could ask or think. It is true he did not baptize them, *for he baptized none*; (John iv. 2.) nor was baptism as yet perfectly settled to be the door of admission; but he did that which was tantamount, he invited them to him, encouraged the bringing of them, and signified to his disciples (to whom the keys of the kingdom of God were to be given) that they were members of his kingdom: and accordingly conferred upon them the blessings of that kingdom. And his giving them the thing signified, may sufficiently justify his ministers in giving the sign.

3. In other societies, the children of such as are members are commonly looked upon as members. Though a wise man doth not beget a wise man, yet a free man begets a free man. The king of England would give those small thanks, who should cut off

all the children of the kingdom from being members of the kingdom. Our law calls natural allegiance, due by birth, *alta ligeantia—high allegiance*, and he that oweth it is called, *subditus natus—natural liege subject*. And it is the privilege of the subject, as well as the prerogative of the king, that it should be so. And shall it not be allowed in the visible kingdom of Christ? By the Jewish law, if a servant married and had children, all the children born in the master's house were the master's, and were taken under his protection, and interested in provision of the family: though they were not as yet capable of doing any service, yet they were part of the master's possession. This law David applies spiritually, (Ps. cxvi. 16.) *O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid; born in thy house. And those consult neither the honour of the master, nor the credit of the family, nor the benefit of their children, who, though servants in Christ's family themselves, will not let their children be such.*

To deny the church membership of the seed of believers, is to deny privileges to those who once had them, and who have never forfeited them. It is, in effect, to deliver their children to Satan, as members of his visible kingdom; for I know no mean between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. Give me leave then, as the infants' advocate, to make their complaint in the words of David, (1 Sam. xxvi. 19.) *They have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods: and to present their petition for a visible church membership, in the words of the Reubenites and Gadites, (Josh. xxii. 24, 25.) For fear lest, in time to come, your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel? ye have no part in the Lord: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord.* Therefore, according to the warrant of the written word, we maintain baptism, as a sign of the church membership of our infants; that it may be a witness for our generations after us, that they may do the service of the Lord, and might not be cut off from following after him. For, whatsoever those who are otherwise minded uncharitably suggest, *the Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know, that it is not in rebellion, nor transgression against the Lord.* We desire to express as great a jealousy as they can do for the institutions of Christ, and are as fearful of going a step without a warrant.

Several other scriptural arguments have been undeniably urged, to prove the church membership of infants; but what was said to prove their covenant right, and to show the reasons of it, serve indifferently to this; for the visible church, and the external ad-

ministration of the covenant, are of equal latitude and extent. Grant me, that infants are of that visible body, or society, to which pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, &c. in the same sense in which these pertained to the Jews of old, and to their seed; and I desire no more. That is their covenant right, and their church membership, which entitleth them to baptism.

ARGUMENT III. If the infants of believing parents are in some sense *holy*, they have a right to the ordinance of baptism; but it is certain, that they are in some sense *holy*, and therefore have a right to be baptized. There is a twofold holiness;

1. Inherent holiness, or sanctification of the Spirit: and who dares say, that infants are not capable even of this? He that saith infants cannot be sanctified, doth, in effect, say, that they cannot be saved; (for without holiness no man can see the Lord;) and he that can say this must be * a *hard-hearted father*: and if they may be internally sanctified, *who can forbid water, that those should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?* Those who baptize only adults, cannot be certain that all they baptize are inherently *holy*; nay, it appears that many of them are not so. There is also

2. A federal holiness; and this is that which we plead for. It is very true, that inherent holiness is not propagated, (we are all *by nature children of wrath*;) but that doth not hinder the propagation of federal holiness. The children of believers, it is true, are born polluted, but it doth not therefore follow, that they are not born privileged. David acknowledgeth the corruption which his mother bore him in, and yet pleads the privilege she bore him in, (Ps. cxvi. 16.) *Thy servant, the son of thine handmaid*; and again, (Ps. lxxxvi. 16.) *Save the son of thy handmaid.*

To prove this federal holiness, two Scriptures are chiefly insisted upon; viz. Rom. xi. 16, 17. *If the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches; and if some of the branches were broken off, and thou being a wild olive, wert grafted in, &c.* That children are branches of their parents none will deny; that inherent holiness is not communicated to the branches, is certain; it must therefore be meant of a federal holiness; which is explained by being grafted into the good olive-tree, i. e. the visible church: the fatness of this olive-tree is the external privileges of church membership: a fatness which some did partake of, who were then broken off. The other passage is, 1 Cor. vii. 14. *Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.* Unclean, means upon a level with the seed of the Gentiles: so unclean is used, Acts x. 28. The children of parents, one or both of whom are believers, are not to be looked upon as thus unclean, but *holy*;

* Durus pater infantium.

i. e. separated and set apart for God; federally holy.

ARGUMENT IV. If the infants of believing parents are disciples, they are to be baptized; but they are disciples, and therefore to be baptized.

1. They are disciples; for they are intended for learning. If you send little children to school who can learn little or nothing, you do it that they may be ready to be taught, as soon as they are capable. If our Lord Jesus has cast little children out of his school, wherefore doth he appoint his ministers to teach them, and express so particular a care to have the *lambs fed*?

2. Circumcision was a yoke upon *children* particularly, yet that is called a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, Acts xv. 1, 10. therefore children are disciples.

3. They who are so to be received in Christ's name, as that Christ himself is received in them, are to be reckoned the disciples of Christ; but the infants of believers are so to be received. See Mark ix. 37. Matt. xviii. 5. compared with Matt. x. 42. Luke ix. 48. They are said to belong to Christ, and must be received as such: as children, they can only be received as creatures, but as the children of professing parents, they may be received in Christ's name; as belonging to Christ, i. e. as disciples.

ARGUMENT V. If it is the duty of all Christian parents solemnly to engage, dedicate, and give up their children to God in covenant, whereby those children are obliged to be to God a people, then they ought to do it by baptism, which is the engaging sign; but it is the duty of all Christian parents thus to engage their children to God, and therefore they ought to baptize them.

1. It is the duty of Christian parents to engage their children to God in covenant. This hath been the practice of God's covenanting people, (Deut. xxix. 11.) *Your little ones stand here to enter into covenant with the Lord.*

(1.) Parents may oblige their children to that which is good. God, as the spring and fountain of our being, may and doth oblige us in a way of sovereignty; and parents, as the natural instruments of our being, are therefore empowered to oblige us in a way of subordinate agency. If not to enlarge the obligation, (though *Jonadab the son of Rechab* did that, and his seed are commended for their observance of his charge,) yet to strengthen and confirm it. The law of God allowed such power to a father as to disannul a vow made by his daughter in his house, though she were come to years of understanding. Much more is it in the power of parents, to oblige their children in infancy to that which is plain and undisputed duty. Hannah was accepted in devoting her son to the Lord as a Naza-

rite from the womb, (1 Sam. i. 11.) nor was it ever questioned whether she might do it or not. Whatever was the matter of Jephtha's vow, his daughter never disputed his power over her. And human authorities, that speak of this parental power as consonant to the law of nature, might easily be produced, if it were material. The common law and custom of our nation, as well as of all other civilized nations, doth abundantly evince it. It is past dispute, that as far as a child hath any thing by descent from his father, the father hath power to determine the disposal of it, in a lawful way, (especially to pay debts,) and to bind his child accordingly. We derive our beings by descent from our parents, who may therefore doubtless determine the disposal of them for God, and communicate them to us charged with that great debt of duty which we owe to the sovereign Lord. The case is much strengthened, if the obligation be built upon a contract confessedly in favour of the child, and greatly to his advantage; which is the case here. Such an obligation implying, by way of penalty, in case of an after-refusal, a forfeiture of the privileges so contracted for. Our children are parts of ourselves, more ours than any thing we have in the world: not ours to be alienated from God, (nothing is so ours,) but to be devoted and given up to him. If it be in the power of parents to prejudice their children, by their breach of covenant, (for God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children,) may they not have a power to benefit their children by an adherence to the covenant?

(2.) If they *may* thus oblige their children to that which is good, certainly they *ought* to do it. When we give up ourselves to God, we ought to give up all that we have to him, to be devoted to him according to its capacity. Those who say, they give themselves to God, but will not give him their children, *keep back part of the price.* They ought, especially, to dedicate *them*, as a testimony of their sincerity in the dedication of *themselves*, and as a means to induce their children to be his. Those who are in truth the Lord's, will lay out all their power and interest for him; and what greater power and interest can there be, than that of parents in, and over, their children?

2. If this must be done, can it be done in any better way than by baptism; which is instituted to be the mutual engaging sign, and the seal of a covenant between God and man? Under the law, whatever was devoted to God, was to be disposed of, according as it was capable, in such a way as might tend most to the honour of God, and best answer the ends of the dedication. To this purpose is the law; (Deut. xxvii.) and though this law be not now in force, the reason of it remains: God is as jealous of his honour as ever. Now the children of believers, notwith-

standing their infancy, are capable of receiving the privileges of the covenant; (are capable of visible church membership;) and therefore are to be dedicated to God by baptism, the seal of the covenant, and the instituted sign of admission into the visible church. And to say that our children are to be dedicated to God, no otherwise than our houses, and estates, and callings, are to be dedicated to him, when really they are capable of a higher dedication, is to wrong both ourselves and our children; and to derogate from the honour of our Master, who would have every thing that is given to him brought as near to him as may be.

ARGUMENT VI. If it be the will and command of the Lord Jesus, that all nations should be disciplined by baptism; and children, though a part of all nations, are not excepted, then children are to be disciplined by baptism: I say, disciplined by baptism, for that is plainly intended by the words of the institution, Matt. xxviii. 19. *μαθητευσατε βαπτιζοντες*—*admit them disciples by baptizing them, as was showed before.* The command is to disciple them; baptizing them is the mode of executing that command. As if a general should say, Enlist soldiers, giving them my colours; (or any like sign;) giving them the colours would be interpreted, enlisting them. So, *disciple them, baptizing them,* doth not note two distinct acts, but the body and soul of the same act; as granting land by sealing a deed, or giving *livery and seisin.* I have said before, that baptism doth not give the title, but recognize it, and complete that church membership which before was imperfect.

And all nations are to be so disciplined. Hitherto, the nation of the Jews only had been disciplined, by circumcision; but now, the partition-wall is taken down, and all nations are to be in like manner disciplined, by the New-Testament ordinance of initiation; i. e. all consenting nations. If any communities or individuals refused, the apostles were to shake off the dust of their feet against them, as having no lot or part in the matter.

And surely infants are a part of nations; and in the discipling of nations, not a *dissenting* part, but a *consenting*, by those who are the trustees of their wills. And our Lord hath not excepted them. There is not the least word in the commission, or any where else in the whole Bible, which implies the exclusion of infants from visible discipleship, when their parents became visible disciples. And, for my part, I dare not except where Christ hath not excepted; especially where the exception would tend so much to the dishonour of Christ, the straitening of the church, the discomfort of the saints, and contradict the clear light of so many other scriptures. I dare not exclude any, who do not exclude themselves, nor are excluded by those, who have a natural interest in them, and power over them.

In this *magna charta*, therefore, we leave the cause of infants fully vindicated; and are willing to stand or fall by this commission. Many other arguments might have been insisted upon; particularly the doctrine and practice of the primitive church; but this shall suffice.

I should next have proceeded to answer the objections of the antipedobaptists; but that hath been so fully done by others, and in a great measure done in the defence of the foregoing arguments, that shall be brief in it.

OBJECT. I. It is objected that infants are not capable of the ends of baptism, having neither understanding nor faith. To this I answer,

(1.) That they have as much understanding as the children of the Jews had, who were circumcised and therein received the seal, both of *justification* (Rom. iv. 11.) and of *sanctification*, (Deut. xxx. 6 and baptism is no more. (2.) That there are many ends of baptism of which children are capable, though not of all till they come to some use of reason. Infants are capable of being admitted subjects into Christ's visible kingdom, which is the primary intention of baptism. A lease, or covenant, between a landlord and a tenant, may be of use to a child, though he understands it not; nay though, when he grows up, he may, perhaps, forfeit the benefit of it. (3.) Parents may, and must, herein transact for their children; being appointed by nature their agents, and having a power to oblige them in other things, and therefore much more in this, which is not only the duty, but the privilege, of their children. Nor is there any danger, that the guilt of covenant-breaking should lie at the parent's door, in case of the apostasy of the children, because the parent's promise not to do the duty themselves, but engage their children to do it; and only oblige themselves to contribute their best endeavours thereunto.

OBJECT. II. It is objected, that infant baptism doth more hurt than good. But certainly,

(1.) What hurt it doth is only through the ignorance or corruption of those who abuse it. Though it may be true, that many carnal people are strengthened in their delusions by their infant baptism, it is well if it be not as true, that many are, in like manner, hardened by being rebaptized; for it is too plain, that they are not all saints indeed. While on the other hand, (2.) There are many humble serious Christians, who can experimentally speak of the benefits of it. Its many practical uses will be shown hereafter. For my own part, I cannot but take this occasion to express my gratitude to God for my infant baptism, not only as it was an early admission into the visible body of Christ, but as it furnished my pious parents with a good argument (and I trust, through grace, a prevailing argument) for an early dedication of my own self to God in my childhood. If God has wrought any good work upon my soul, I

desire, with humble thankfulness, to acknowledge the moral influence of my infant baptism upon it.

OBJECT. III. We have no precept, (say they,) nor precedent, in all the New Testament, for infant baptism.

Though we have already shown considerable footsteps of it in the New Testament, yet, in answer to his objection, we further add, (1.) It is sufficient that the essentials of an ordinance be clearly instituted, though the circumstantials, or accidentals, be not. Christ instituted the Lord's supper, but we have neither precept nor precedent for admitting women to it. Our opponents say, that the practice of baptizing actual believers only, is more agreeable to the practice of Christ and the apostles; I say, that the practice of admitting men only, to the Lord's supper, is more agreeable to the practice of Christ and the apostles; and let the consequents stand or fall together. The substance of the ordinance of baptism is clearly instituted by Christ for the admission of visible church members, and it is left to us to infer the application of it to all those who have a right to visible church membership; which it is undeniably proved that infants have. (2.) Supposing that we cannot show any precept, or precedent, in the New Testament, for baptizing the infant seed of Christians, neither can the anabaptists show one word of precept, or precedent, for baptizing the child of any one Christian at years of discretion, in all the New Testament. I challenge them all to produce any one instance of the deferring of the baptism of any believer's child to years of discretion. Now the lawyers have a rule, *that an estoppel against an estoppel sets the matter at large*. We have no such clear direction, as some may think there should have been, what to do with the seed of believers; and if the dispute be drawn in the New Testament, I know not whither to appeal more properly than to the Old; where we find such abundant evidence of the church membership of the infant seed of believers, and of their title to the ordinance of initiation, while we do not find a word in all the New Testament which deprives them of either, (but a great deal in affirmance thereof,) that we conclude (blessed be God, abundantly to our satisfaction) that they still remain in full force and virtue.

CHAPTER III.

THE NECESSITY AND EFFICACY OF BAPTISM.

HAVING inquired what baptism is, and to whom it is to be administered, our next inquiry must be, what stress is to be laid upon it? And here we have need to walk circumspectly, for fear of mistakes, on the right hand, and on the left. What I have to say

on this head shall be reduced to the following questions:

QUEST. I. Whether baptism be necessary to salvation?

In answer to which, we must have recourse to the known distinctions of (*necessitas præcepti*) what is necessary because commanded, and (*necessitas medii*) what is necessary as a mean; and also (*necessitas hypothetica*) conditional necessity, and (*necessitas absoluta*) absolute necessity. And so it seems that baptism is, *conditionally*, a necessary duty; but not, *absolutely*, a necessary mean. We have adversaries to deal with on both hands; some, who are so far from thinking it a *necessary mean*, that they deny it to be a *necessary duty*; (so, many of the Socinians;) and others, who not only plead for it as a *necessary duty*, but assert it to be *necessary as a mean* of salvation: (*so the papists*;) and the truth seems to be between them.

1. The necessity of water baptism, as a continuing duty, is proved,

(1.) From the will and command of the Lord Jesus; *Go and disciple all nations, baptizing them*: which was intended to be a warrant, not only to the apostles, in planting the church, but to all ministers, in all following ages; as the promise annexed doth abundantly prove, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world*. The ordinance of the Lord's supper is expressly said to continue till Christ's coming, i. e. till the end of time, (1 Cor. xi. 26.) and no reason can be given, why baptism should not run parallel with it, since they are both signs and seals of the same grace. Nor did the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, supersede external ordinances, but rather lead to them; for having received the Holy Ghost, is assigned as the reason why water baptism should not be forbidden to Cornelius and his friends; (Acts x. 47.) and though the apostles are bidden to go into *all nations* and baptize, they went not into *any of the nations* till after the Spirit was poured out.

(2.) From the continuance of *circumcision* in the Old-Testament church: which was instituted not only for the founding of that church, but to be observed in *their generations*, Gen. xvii. 9, 10. As therefore circumcision continued a standing ordinance in the Old-Testament church till the first coming of Christ, by a parity of reason, baptism, which comes in the room of it, is to continue a standing ordinance in the New-Testament church till the second coming of Christ.

(3.) From the continuance of the end intended in this institution. It was instituted to be the door of admission into the visible church: and without some such door, either all must be shut out, or all must be taken in: either of which would be absurd; for the church is a society distinct from the world, and the God of the church is a God of order, and not confusion.

Though the children of believing parents have, by their birth, a remote church membership, and covenant right, yet it is requisite for the preserving of order in the church, that there should be a solemn recognition of that right, and some visible token of admission. As in the case of converted heathens; though, upon their believing, they have a right to the privileges of the covenant before baptism, (for baptism doth not confer a right, but only recognize it,) yet it was the will of Christ that they should be solemnly admitted by baptism, for the honour of the church as a distinct society. Thus, in the ordinance of marriage, (an ordinance common to the whole world,) the mutual declared consent of both parties, is the essence of the marriage, yet, for order's sake, all civilized nations have enjoined a solemnity of investiture.

(4.) From the continuance of the benefits conferred, and the obligations imposed, by baptism: which are such as pertain, not only to those who are converted from heathenism to Christianity, but to those also who are born of Christian parents. We are all concerned to *put on Christ*, and to have *communion with Christ in his death*; we all need *the remission of sins*, and *the sanctification of the Spirit*, and *eternal life*; so that while we are expecting these privileges, and taking upon ourselves these engagements, it is fit that both should be done, in that ordinance, which was appointed to signify and seal both the one and the other. The church must be *sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water, by the word, till it is presented a glorious church*, Eph. v. 26, 27.

And this may be of use to rectify the mistake of some well-meaning people, who, having been unhappily defrauded of the privilege of baptism in their infancy, when grown up, do themselves neglect it; thinking it sufficient, that they do that which is intended by baptism, though they do it not in that way. Such would do well to consider, what a slight they put upon the law of Christ. It would be thought too harsh, should we, in this, parallel baptism to circumcision, which had so severe a sentence annexed to the law which required it, (Gen. xvii. 14.) *The uncircumcised man-child*, (i. e. when he is come to years of discretion,) *whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised*, (not only through the neglect of his parents, when he was an infant, but by his own, when grown up,) *that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant*.

2. Baptism is not *simply and absolutely necessary as a mean*. This is the popish extreme. But, as in doctrine, so in worship, the middle way is the *good old way*, the good safe way.

When we speak of baptism as a mean, and the necessity of it as such, we must distinguish between

external and internal means. Internal means are such as have so necessary a connexion with the end, as that the end cannot be obtained without them. Such are faith, repentance, and justification: means of salvation absolutely necessary; so that salvation is never without them as the means, nor they without salvation as the end. But external means are not thus connected with the end, but only subservient to it, by God's ordination. Not so, but that the end may sometimes be obtained without them, and they may often miss of the end: and sacraments are such means of salvation. The Council of Trent denounceth a curse against those who say, that baptism is not absolutely necessary to salvation.* But that it is not thus necessary, is fully proved by the following arguments:

(1.) God is a free agent in dispensing his grace: *he begets of his own will*; which doth not depend upon the will of the parent, so as to be frustrated by his neglecting to baptize his child.

(2.) Circumcision, under the Old Testament, was not absolutely necessary to salvation; therefore baptism is not under the New: for then, the conditions of Christians would, in this respect, be harder than that of the Jews. God appointed circumcision to be administered on the eighth day, and not before: and certainly it would have been very hard upon children to have deferred it so long, if it had been necessary to salvation. David's child died on the seventh day, consequently uncircumcised, and yet he comforts himself with the hope of its salvation. (2 Sam. xii. 23.) *I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me*. Yea, all the children of Israel were forty years together in the wilderness without circumcision, which it is hard to suppose was damning to those who were born and died during that time. The threatening, Gen. xvii. 14. is against the wilful neglect, and not the involuntary privation.

(3.) If baptism were thus absolutely necessary, unbaptized children would perish eternally, without any fault of their own; and so the child would bear the personal iniquities of the father: which is contrary to Ezek. xviii. 20.

(4.) Our Saviour doth plainly put a difference between the necessity of faith, and the necessity of baptism, to salvation, Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved*; but he doth not say, he that *believeth not*, and *is not baptized, shall be damned*, but only, *he that believeth not shall be damned*; for faith is the internal, baptism but the external, mean.

(5.) The infants of believing parents have an interest in the promises of God, which is the thing signified by baptism; and can it be imagined, that they should be shut out of heaven for want of the sign?

* *Si quis dixerit baptismum liberorum esse, (hoc est non necessarium ad salutem,) anathema sit*; which the Trent catechism explains to be such a necessity, *ut nisi per gratiam baptismi Deo renascantur, (homines,)*

in sempiternam miseriam, et interitum, a parentibus, sive fideles, sive infideles sint, procreantur.

To suggest such a thing, is not only very uncharitable in itself, but, we think, reflects dishonour upon Christ; the goodness of his nature, the grace of his covenant, and the constitution of his kingdom; and must needs be very uncomfortable to Christian parents. When God hath said, that he will be a God to believers, and to their seed, the neglect of man, much less the wise providence of God, shall not make the promise of no effect.

QUEST. II. What effect hath baptism upon baptized infants, and how doth it operate?

The anabaptists say, it hath none at all, and therefore argue, to what purpose is this waste? Their exceptions have been answered before. The papists assert, that sacraments confer grace, (*ex opere operato*;) by virtue of the sacramental action itself: but as to baptism, it is expressly said, that it doth not save us, as it is the putting away of the filth of the flesh, (which is the sacramental action,) but the answer of a good conscience, (1 Pet. iii. 21.) and there we leave the question. And others, even many protestants, have said, that the sacrament of baptism doth as an instrumental, efficient cause, confer, and effect, the grace of actual regeneration; so that the infant baptized is freed, not only from the guilt, but the dominion of sin, and the Spirit of grace is given, as the seed, whence the future acts of grace and holiness, watered by the word, may, in time, spring forth. Thus, the church of England concludes concerning every baptized child, that it is regenerated, and born again. In opposition to which Mr. Baxter pleads, "That baptism was not instituted to be a seal of the absolute promise of the first special grace, I will give them a new heart, but to be a seal of the covenant properly so called, wherein God engageth himself, conditionally, to be our God, to save us, and we engage ourselves to be his people, to serve him, and so to perform the said condition; and if not to be a seal of the absolute covenant, then not to be an instrument of conveying the grace of that covenant, but a mean of conveying the good promised in the conditional covenant, according to the capacity of the subject: and therefore it seals, to the infants of believers, the promise of salvation, so as to be a mean of conferring the benefit of salvation upon them, not as a physical, or hyperphysical, instrument, but only as a moral instrument; by sealing, and so conveying, a legal right, which is afterwards improvable, as a mean of working a real change upon the souls of those who have faith, and the use of reason." What I have to say on this head is,

1. As to the relative influence of baptism, I look upon it to be the door of admission into the visible church; so that all who are duly baptized, are thereby admitted visible church members, and (to borrow the Hebrew phrase before mentioned) gathered under the wings of the Divine Majesty; and the new covenant being externally administered in the visi-

ble church, it is conditionally sealed to all who are baptized (and particularly to the seed of believers) upon the parents' faith: the parents' will being accepted for the child's, and the parents' present consent and dedication, laying an obligation upon the child for the future.

This then is the efficacy of baptism; it is putting the child's name into the gospel grant; and thus is a sealing ordinance, and a binding ordinance. The child's actual faith, and repentance, and obedience, are thereby made (to speak in the lawyers' language) *debita in presenti, solvenda in futuro*, debts then incurred, to be paid at a future time. And surely this is abundantly sufficient, to invite and encourage parents to dedicate their children to God in baptism. For if this be true, (as it certainly is,) it is not (that *nudum signum*) that empty childish thing, which the antipedobaptists love to call it.

2. As to the real influence of baptism, we cannot be so clear; nor need we. As far as the parents are concerned, we are sure, that the children are not so regenerated, as not to need good instructions, when they become capable of them, and yet are so regenerated, that if they die in infancy, parents may take comfort from their baptism in reference to their salvation: and as to the children, when they grow up, we are sure, that their baptismal regeneration, without something more, is not sufficient to bring them to heaven: and yet it may be urged, (as I said before,) in praying to God to give them grace, and in persuading them to submit to it.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM.

BAPTISM, as a sacrament, consists of a sign, and the thing signified by it. Our inquiries now must be about the sign, and the administration of that; in which several things claim a brief consideration: viz.

I. Concerning the manner of administering, or applying water, to the person baptized.

And about this the enemy hath sowed tares; hath raised a great dispute, whether it must necessarily be done by immersion, i. e. by dipping the person all over in water: and there are those, who make this mode of applying water, of the very essence of the ordinance, and, with much bitterness, condemn those, who have so much of the spirit of the gospel, as not to impose, and make necessary, what Christ hath not made so; and who, if water be but solemnly applied, reckon it altogether indifferent, whether it be by infusion, inspersion, or immersion. Let us,

1. Examine a little the strength of their cause, of which they are so confident. And,

1. They plead that the word βαπτίζω (from βάπτω) signifies *only* to immerse, or dip into water; and recourse is had to the Greek Lexicons in proof of this; but to little purpose, as the best Lexicons render it, to wash in general, as well as to wash by plunging, or dipping: and we really think, that when Christ saith, *Baptize*, he means no more than *wash with water*. But, not to trouble ourselves with searching the sense of the word in other Greek authors, we will inquire into the sense of it in the New Testament, and hope our opponents will not refuse to join issue with us in the inquiry. Heb. ix. 10. we read of *divers washings*; (διαφοροῖς βαπτισμοῖς—*divers baptisms*;) he instanceth in the water of purification, verse 13. *the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean*: compare the two, and it appears, that that is a true baptism, or washing, which is by sprinkling.*

Luke xi. 38. the Pharisees wondered that our Lord had not first washed, (οτι ο πρωτον εβαπτισθη—that he was not first baptized,) not that he was not plunged all over in water, but that he did not wash his hands. Compare Mark vii. 2, 3, 5. It seems then, that the washing of the hands may be the baptizing of the man: and why not the washing of the face. Nay, it should seem that the usual way of washing even the hands, among the Jews, was not by dipping them into water, but by having water poured upon them: for Elisha's ministering to Elijah is thus described, *he poured water upon the hands of Elijah*, 2 Kings iii. 11.†

Mark vii. 4. among the superstitious washings or baptisms (as they are called) of the Pharisees, we read of the baptism (i. e. washing) of tables, or rather beds, or couches, as the word (κλιωνων) properly signifies; and was it likely, that beds or couches, or even tables, should often be washed by plunging them into water? Surely it was done by sprinkling, or pouring, water upon them.

Rev. xix. 13. we meet with *ματιον βαβαμμενον*—*a garment baptized with blood*, i. e. stained or tinged with blood; and that by sprinkling, as appears by comparing the parallel passage, Isa. lxiii. 3. *Their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garment, and so will I stain all my raiment*. If the word then, so often, or indeed any where, signifies washing by sprinkling, or pouring on of water, as it certainly doth, the argument for immersion, from the signification of the word, falls to the ground.

2. They assert, that Jesus Christ, and others in Scripture, were baptized by immersion; and therefore that any other mode of baptizing is not only unlawful, but renders the baptism null and void. To which we answer,

(1.) Supposing that Christ, and others in Scripture times, were baptized by immersion, yet it doth not therefore follow, that that mode is still indispensably necessary to the essence of the ordinance. Christ often preached sitting; is it therefore unlawful for ministers to preach standing? But that which is more considerable is, that bathing was very much in use in those times and places, especially among those who were under the ceremonial law; and while this was an ordinary way of washing, to which all persons were accustomed, perhaps it was the fittest to be used in baptism, where washing is the sign. But with us it is far otherwise: bathing is a thing seldom used; and therefore, as in the Lord's supper, not the posture of recumbency, which our Lord used. (according to the custom of the country,) but our own ordinary table gesture, is the most proper: so in baptism, not dipping, which was then an ordinary way of washing, but sprinkling or pouring water, which is now the usual way of our daily washing, is most proper. For the sign, in both ordinances, is taken from a common action, and the more like it is to that common action, the better, and the more instructive. But,

(2.) There is no such convincing evidence from Scripture, that Christ and others were baptized by dipping, as (supposing the obligation of the pattern) may justly be required to prove it essential to the ordinance.

As to the baptism of Christ, it is far from certain that it was by immersion. John indeed is said to have baptized *εν υδατι*—*in water*, but so is Christ said to baptize *εν πυρι*. Doth that mean *in fire*? no, *with fire*. The preposition *εν* frequently signifies *with*. See Rev. xix. 21. *εν ρομφα*—*with the sword*.

Again, it is urged, that Jesus was baptized *εσ Ιορδανην*—*into Jordan*. But the preposition (*εσ*) often signifies *at*, as well as *in*, or *into*. However, it does not certainly express plunging in the water: they then went bare-legged, and therefore might readily go into the water and be washed, without being dipped all over.

Moreover, Christ is said, after his baptism, to go out of the water, Matt. iii. 16. and Mark i. 10. but it is remarkable, that in both places the original is not *εκ υδατος*—*out of the water*, but *απο του υδατος*—*from the water*; i. e. he came up the ascent from the river: though indeed, had he been only ankle deep, and not plunged, he might have been said to have come out of the water.

And once more, John chose a place to baptize in, where there was *much water*, John iii. 23. but the words are, *υδατα πολλα*—*many waters*, i. e. many

* Daniel iv. 30. *His body was wet with the dew of heaven*, the LXX render, *και απο του ουρου του ουρανο το σωμα αυτου εβαφη*—his body was baptized with the dew of heaven.

† This mode of washing the hands, is still in daily use amongst

the Hindoos, many of whose customs are of great antiquity, and bear a striking resemblance to those of the ancient Jews. See Mrs. Kindersley's Letters from the East Indies, No. 122. and 124.

streams; therefore probably shallow, unfit for plunging: and accordingly travellers find the river Enon only a small brook, which a man may step over.

And as to others, whose baptism we read of, I find none, except the eunuch, of whose immersion there is any apparent probability. Several were baptized in private houses; as Paul, and the jailer, and his family; the latter in the night; and it is very unlikely that he had any conveniency for being dipped there.

(3.) They plead, Rom. vi. 4. and Col. ii. 12. *Buried with him in baptism*; where they fancy an allusion to the ceremony of baptizing by dipping: which I see no necessity for at all. Good wits may from thence illustrate the text, and no harm done; but to force so uncertain an illusion, so far, as to condemn almost all the baptisms of the Christian church, in all ages, is a great wresting of Scripture. Our conformity to Christ lies not in the sign, but in the thing signified. Hypocrites and unbelievers, like Simon Magus, though they be dipped an hundred times, are not buried with Christ by baptism; and true Christians are by faith buried with Christ, though they be not dipped at all; having *fellowship of his sufferings, and being made conformable unto his death*, Phil. iii. 10. *We are baptized into the death of Christ*, and by baptism *put on Christ*; but it doth not therefore follow, that there must needs be, in the external sign, any thing that resembles either killing or clothing.

(4.) The testimony of men is much urged in this case: and I believe that immersion, yea, trine immersion, or plunging the person baptized three times, was commonly used in very early ages; and that, as far as popery prevailed, a great deal of stress was laid upon it: and the church of England, in the rubric of baptism, prescribes dipping, and tolerates sprinkling only in case of bodily weakness: but our recourse is to the law and the testimony.

2. Let us now see what is to be said against baptism by immersion, or plunging in water. And,

1. It unavoidably occasions a very great distraction and discomposure of mind, in the management of a solemn ordinance; and is therefore evil. Putting an adult person, unused to bathing, over head in water, must needs, for the present, unfit him for any thoughts suitable to such a solemnity: and great care is to be taken, that we may *attend upon the Lord without distraction*, 1 Cor. viii. 35.

2. In many cases, this mode is very perilous to the health, and even life, of the body: and God hath taught us, that he will have *mercy, and not sacrifice*, Matt. xii. 7. In so cold a climate as ours, especially to some people, and at some seasons, bathing in cold water would be almost certainly fatal. Ask the best physicians, if this be not true.

3. To baptize naked, or next to naked, (which is supposed, and generally practised, in immersion,) is against the law of modesty; and to do such a thing in public solemn assemblies, is so far from being tolerable, that it is abominable, to every chaste soul: and especially to baptize women in this manner. If, when veils were commonly used, the woman was to have a veil on her head, to cover her face in the congregation, *because of the angels*, (whether that mean young men, or ministers, or heavenly spirits,) I am sure the argument is much stronger, against her appearing almost naked in such a congregation. Is this for women to *adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness, and sobriety?*^a

4. However, I am sure, that to lay such a stress upon the ceremony of dipping, as not only to condemn, but to nullify, and reproach, all those baptismal washings, which are performed by pouring on water, is very uncharitable, and dissonant from the spirit of the gospel. *Bodily exercise profiteth little.*^a In sacraments, it is the truth, and not the quantity, of the outward element, that is to be insisted upon. In the Lord's supper, eating a little bread, and drinking a little wine, sufficeth to exhibit the thing signified; and we need not, nay we should not, fill ourselves with either; and yet it is called a supper, 1 Cor. xi. 20. So in the ordinance of baptism, the application of a little water, provided there be water, and a washing with that water, is sufficient to signify spiritual washing. Aaron and his sons were the Lord's priests, though the blood of consecration was only put *upon the tips of their ears, and on their thumbs, and great toes*, Lev. viii. 24.

3. We shall just hint at what is to be said, for the administration of baptismal washing by sprinkling, or pouring, water on the face, or head; which is the more usual mode.

The overthrow of the other mode is, indeed, enough to establish this: washing is the main matter in the sign, which is sufficiently done by sprinkling or pouring water. But I add further, the thing signified by baptism is frequently, in Scripture, set forth by sprinkling or pouring water, but never, that I remember, by dipping or plunging into water. Thus, Isaiah xlv. 3. *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty*; and Isaiah lii. 15. *He shall sprinkle many nations*; a prediction or promise, which many think refers to the ordinance of baptism, and seems to be particularly fulfilled, in the commission to *disciple all nations, by baptizing them*. And again, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. *I will sprinkle clean water upon you*. And particularly, in the improvement of our baptism, we are said to be *sprinkled from an evil conscience*, Heb. x. 22. So Tit. iii. 5, 6. that which is signified by the laver of regeneration, is the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he *shed* on us. The

^a 1 Tim. ii. 2.

^a 1 Tim. iv. 8.

blood of Christ is called *the blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24. If immersion is so proper, as some conceive, to represent our being buried with Christ, (though to me it seems far fetched,) I am sure sprinkling doth much more plainly represent the sprinkling of the blood, and the pouring forth of the Spirit of Christ upon the soul: and if one scripture alludes to one manner of washing, and another to another, it intimates to us, that the mode is in itself indifferent, and that Christians are left to choose that, which, upon other accounts, is most convenient and edifying.

On the whole then it appears, that the dust which has been raised about the mode of baptism, is nothing else but a device of Satan, to perplex ignorant, and to delude unstable, souls. I shall say but very little,

II. Concerning the persons by whom baptism is to be administered: concluding, that gospel ministers, and they only, have authority to administer this ordinance; for they only are *the stewards of the mysteries of God*. To them only the commission is given, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. *Go ye and disciple all nations, baptizing them, teaching them to observe, &c.* The same persons who are to teach, by office, are to baptize; and *no man should take this honour to himself, but he that is called of God*. I proceed therefore to consider,

III. The time when baptism is to be administered. And,

1. As to the adult, who are baptized upon a personal profession, it is plain, that in Scripture times, it was administered presently, and without delay, upon their profession of Christianity: *the same day there were added* (i. e. by baptism) *three thousand souls*, (Acts ii. 41.) the same day that they believed. The eunuch was baptized immediately upon his believing, (Acts viii. 38.) and Paul, as soon as ever he came to himself, and the scales fell from his eyes, *arose, and was baptized*, Acts ix. 18. And once more, the jailer was baptized, *he and all his, straightway*, Acts xvi. 23.

This was the method the apostles took: but afterwards the church generally required more time; and deferred the baptism of the adult, till they had long been in the state of catechumens, and given ample testimony of their proficiency in knowledge, and of a blameless conversation. The apostolic constitutions appoint three years for the catechumens to be instructed, yet allowing an admission sooner in case of a manifest maturity: but was not this an excess of strictness, and making the door of the church straiter than Christ and the apostles made it? And certainly, the practice which afterwards prevailed, of restraining the administration of baptism to certain days, and of deferring it till the point of death, from a notion that sin committed after baptism was unpardonable, are to be imputed only to ignorance and superstition.

2. When is it to be administered to infants?

In Cyprian's time, (about the middle of the third century,) it seems that there was a controversy about the baptizing of infants; not whether they ought to be baptized, (that had never been disputed,) but concerning the time when; whether on the second or third day, or (as circumcision of old) on the eighth day? For the determination of which, Cyprian, with the advice of sixty-six pastors, wrote a synodical letter, to prove, that it was not necessary to defer it till the eighth day, as the mercy and grace of God are not to be denied to new-born children: and in this, saith Austin, he did not make a new decree, but preserved the ancient faith of the church.

As to the time of baptizing infants then, the mean is to be kept between two extremes.

(1.) It should not be causelessly deferred, as if it were a thing indifferent whether it be done or not. It argues a contempt of the ordinance, and a slight regard to our children's covenant right, to delay the administration, perhaps because the feast cannot yet be provided, or such or such a fine friend procured to stand gossip. Thus a solemn and important institution of Christ is often made to truckle to mean and inconsiderable respects. Moses's deferring to circumcise his child, had like to have cost him dear. On the other hand,

(2.) It should not be superstitiously hastened and precipitated. There are many, who are most negligent about it while their children are well, who, if they are sick, and likely to die, will be very solicitous to get it done with all speed; and will call up a minister at midnight rather than fail. But where there hath not been a culpable delay, i. e. where no convenient opportunity hath been let slip, if it please God to visit the child with threatening sickness, I see no reason for thus precipitating the ordinance. Baptism is the appointed door into the church militant, which supposeth the child likely to live; not into the church triumphant, which supposeth the child dying. The administration of baptism is a solemn thing, and ought to be attended with all the natural circumstances of solemnity; and therefore, to hurry the administration, while the child is dying in the arms of the minister, is by no means agreeable. Besides, that this practice is grounded upon a great mistake, viz. that baptism is absolutely necessary to the salvation of the child. Let people be taught, that baptism doth not confer, but recognize, their children's covenant-right; and that, where there is no wilful neglect, God accepts the will for the deed, and will not lay to the charge of us, or ours, the want of that, which, by his own wise providence, we were prevented having in a regular way, and with due solemnity; and they will not be so eager to precipitate the administration.

IV. It will be proper to say a little concerning the place where baptism is to be administered.

In the first ages of the church, it was usual to baptize any where, where there was water, but always (as Dr. Cave observes) as near as might be to the place of their public assemblies; for it was seldom done without the presence of the congregation. In process of time, they erected *baptisteria* (fonts we call them) near the church doors, to signify, that baptism is the door of admission into the church.

All that I have to observe upon this head, is, that it is most fitting and convenient, that the ordinance of baptism be administered publicly, in the face of the congregation. And this is the judgment of the best ordered churches, even of those in which baptism is most commonly administered in private; in which it is rather tolerated as a corruption, than countenanced by the constitution. The church of England allows not of private baptism, except in cases of necessity; and even then, appoints the public recognition and ratification of it. The church of Scotland, by a late act of General Assembly, has strictly forbidden the administration of either of the sacraments in private. And the reformed church in France likewise appoints, that baptism should be administered in the presence of the congregation. And there are good reasons why it should be performed publicly: for,

1. It is an act of solemn religious worship, and therefore should be attended with all due circumstances of solemnity; and the more public the more solemn. Huddling it up in a corner is no way agreeable to the state and grandeur of the ordinance; it should be performed in a *holy convocation*.

2. It is the initiating ordinance; the matriculation of visible church members; and therefore ought to be public, that the congregation may be witnesses for the church membership of the person baptized, and against his apostasy. In covenanting with God, as in other contracts, it is good, for the strengthening of the obligation, to have witnesses. Thus, Josh. xxiv. 22. *You are witnesses against yourselves, &c. nay, (v. 27.) this stone shall be a witness to you.*

3. It is an edifying ordinance.

It is of great use to all, to be frequently reminded of their original corruption, and of their baptismal covenant; which is best done by the public administration of this ordinance: and we should consult, not only what makes for peace, but what makes for edification: and therefore ministers ought not to refuse their hearers the benefit they might derive from being spectators of this solemnity. The sacred mysteries of God covet not obscurity, like the profane mysteries of the pagan religion. Truth seeks no corners. Though this institution has not any gaudy attire to recommend it, yet it hath so much true native beauty and excellency, that it needs not decline a public administration.

I would not indeed drive this point further than it will fairly go. I do not question but that in many cases, baptism may be administered in private. The jailer was baptized in his own house. And how far ministers should herein comply with the inclinations of their people, I cannot say. Paul preached *privately to them who were of reputation*;° and, perhaps, we may from thence take a direction in this case. Some may be led to public baptism by degrees, who would not be driven to it all at once. I see no reason indeed why any Christians should be ashamed of their profession: it is a culpable bashfulness when we blush to own our covenant relation to God, for ourselves, and for our seed.

The public administration of baptism would be of good use to establish people in the truth concerning it, and would therefore help us to keep our ground against those who oppose it. Many waver about infant baptism, because they were never duly affected by it; as they might have been by the solemn administration of it in public. On all these accounts, I recommend baptizing in public as very convenient, though I would not have it imposed as absolutely necessary.

V. I shall just mention the rites and ceremonies attending the administration of baptism: and as to these, Dr. Cave well observes, that in the apostolic age baptism was administered with great plainness and simplicity; and the apostles' age was certainly the best and purest age of the church. Strict conformity to the Scripture rule, without the super-added inventions of men, is the true beauty of Christian ordinances.

1. Every thing is sanctified by the word and prayer,^p and particularly sacraments.

The word is our warrant for what we do; and therefore should be read, as our commission, *Go ye and disciple all nations, baptizing them*. The nature of the ordinance should be opened, and of the covenant of which it is the seal, and care taken to fix a right notion of the institution, and to raise the affections of the congregation.

Prayer must accompany the word: for it is not from any virtue in the administration, or in him who administers, that sacraments become effectual means of salvation, but only by the blessing of Christ; which blessing is to be sought by prayer. Anciently, saith Dr. Cave, all the formality of baptism was a short prayer, and repeating the words of the institution: and it appears, that for several ages, this baptismal prayer was not any set prescribed form, but, as Justin Martyr saith of their other prayers, (*οση δυναμις*.) according to the minister's ability.

This prayer ought to be suited to the ordinance: acknowledging the goodness of God to us in making a new covenant, when the first covenant was so irre-

° Gal. ii. 2.

^p 1 Tim. iv. 5.

parably broken, and in appointing sacraments to be the seals of that covenant, *that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation*; giving him thanks, that the covenant of grace is herein so well ordered, that not only we, but our seed, are taken into it; dedicating the child to God accordingly; begging that he would honour his own ordinance with his presence, and sanctify and bless it to the child; that the washing of the child with water, in the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, may effectually signify, and seal, his ingrafting into Christ; and that he may thereby partake of the privileges of the new covenant, and be engaged to be the Lord's.

2. For as much as it is the parents' profession of faith in Christ, and obedience to him, that entitles the child to baptism, according to the tenor of the new covenant, it is requisite that at least one of the parents do publicly make that profession, in the presence of the congregation, at the demand of the minister; and likewise declare a desire to have the child brought, by baptism, into the bond of the gospel covenant; and a full purpose and resolution to bring it up (if spared in life) in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; i. e. as a Christian. But if the parents are dead, or cannot possibly be present, the minister may doubtless go upon the known profession of the parents, or the proof of it, by the attestation of those who knew them. Only (as was observed before) in this case it is requisite that the children's guardians, or next relations or those who have the care of them, do undertake for their pious and Christian education.

3. Our Master hath prescribed the words of dedication, *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*: this therefore should be constantly and devoutly pronounced, as the water is applied; and immediately before, or after, the doing of this, it may not be amiss to declare, that, according to the institution and command of our Lord Jesus Christ, "I do admit this child a visible church member."

4. After the administration, it is proper that the minister should be a remembrancer to the parents of their duty in bringing up their child as a Christian. The people likewise have need, upon such occasions, to be directed in, and excited to, the practical improvement of their own baptism. After which, it is fit to conclude with suitable prayers and praises.

But before we close this chapter, it will be proper just to mention a few appendages to the administration of baptism: as,

1. Naming the child. And this is a laudable custom, against which I know of no objection. It was borrowed from the Jewish custom of naming chil-

dren at their circumcision; and as baptism is the enrolment of the person baptized among professing Christians, it is not improper then to fix the name (or *notamen*;) though too many ignorant people consider the giving of the name as the main matter against which they should therefore be cautioned.

2. Godfathers and godmothers. And concerning these we have spoken before; and showed how unreasonable and unscriptural a practice it is, to deprive the parents of the right of dedicating their own children, to devolve it upon those who have no part nor lot in them. Early footsteps indeed there are of this sponsorship in the primitive times, but quite of another nature.

3. Rites and ceremonies which have been used in the administration of this ordinance.

And in sacraments, where there is appointed something of an outward sign, the inventions of men have been too fruitful of additions; for which they have pleaded a great deal of decency and significance while the ordinance itself hath been thereby miserably obscured and corrupted. I shall only mention the most considerable of those used very anciently in the church; (of those now practised in the church of Rome, see the ritual;) e. g. 1. A kind of exorcism and insufflation; which signified the expelling of the evil spirit, and the breathing in of the good spirit. 2. An unction, or anointing the person baptized upon the breast, and between the shoulders, which they fancied very proper to signify the sanctification of the heart to receive the law of God, and the preparation of the shoulders to bear the yoke of Christ; and that Christians were *kings and priests unto God*. 3. Dr. Cave thinks, that with this unction they used the sign of the cross, made upon the forehead; which they did to show, that they were not to be ashamed of the cross of Christ. 4. Trine immersion, or putting the person baptized three times under water, once at the mention of each of the persons of the Trinity, to signify their distinct dedication to each. And, 5. After a second anointing, when the person was taken out of the water, they put on him a white garment, to signify, that *those who were baptized into Christ, had put on Christ, and were to walk with him in white*.*

And, besides all these, many countries had particular customs of their own. But setting aside the word, and prayer, and the circumstances of natural decency, I see no need of any of these additions. The spouse of Christ looks most glorious in her native beauty, and needs not the paint and tawdry attire of a harlot. Purity is the true glory of gospel ordinances; and all these appendages, instead of adorning the institutions of Christ, have really deformed and injured them. And those who plead for the continuance of some of these ceremonies

* From the wearing of this white garment, *Whitsunday* took its name, that being a great day of baptism.

open a door for the admission of the rest. The chrism, or anointing with oil, is as significant, and as ancient, and has as much foundation in Scripture, as the sign of the cross; and if we must be governed so much by the practice of antiquity, while the other is retained, why must this be exploded? or rather, when this is so decently laid aside, why should the other be so strictly imposed; especially when it is become such a stone of stumbling, and such a rock of offence?

CHAPTER V.

OF THE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF OUR OWN BAPTISM.

IT hath been the accursed policy of the great enemy of souls, by raising disputes about Christ's truths and ordinances, to rob the church of the benefit of those truths and ordinances. While the field lies in suit, what should be spent in improving the ground, is thrown away in maintaining the suit, and the land lies fallow. There would not be so much quarrelling about infant baptism, if there were but more care to make that practical improvement of it which is required. It is owing to a carnal heart, that the benefit of it is not obtained, and then the thing itself is disputed. In this circle many a poor soul hath been made giddy: infant baptism is questioned, because it is not improved; and then it is not improved, because it is questioned. *If any man set himself seriously to do his will in this matter, by a diligent and conscientious improvement of his baptism, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether we speak of ourselves.*^a We should labour to find, by experience, the moral influence of our baptism, both upon our comfort and our holiness.

When I say we must improve our baptism, I mean, that we must carry it in every thing as a baptized people; and our whole conversation must be under the influence of our baptism. Would you have all our Christian duty in one word, it is, to behave in every respect as those who are baptized; that is, *to have our conversation as becomes the gospel of Jesus Christ.*^b

In opening this, I shall endeavour,

I. To show that it is our great concernment to improve our baptism.

II. To give some general rules for the improvement of our baptism. And,

III. To point out some particular instances in which we should improve our baptism.

I. It is the great concernment of those who are by baptism admitted members of the visible church,

practically to improve their baptism, and to live accordingly.

In dealing with many people, it is much easier to direct them than to persuade them; to inform them what is to be done, than to prevail with them to do it. And of the many who lie under the baptismal vow, how few are there who are at all sensible of the engagement! as if their baptism were only the giving of them a name. The profane Lucian said, in derision of his baptism, that he got nothing by it but the change of his name: and multitudes there are who get no more.

The improvement of our baptism is very much our concernment, if we have any regard to honour, honesty, or interest.

1. In point of honour.

By our baptism, we assume the Christian name; and is it not a shame to profess one thing, and practise another? to own the name, and deny the thing? *Either change your name, or your manners,* was the reprimand which the great Alexander gave to his namesake, who was a coward. By baptism we engaged ourselves to be the Lord's; and bound ourselves, by the strongest ties imaginable, *against all sin, and to all duty*; and is it not a shame to say and unsay? The great ones of the earth, whose names are raised a degree or two above their neighbours, stand much upon the punctilios of their honour, and scorn to do any thing base, to disparage their families, or forfeit their ensigns of honour, or incur the disgrace of a broken sword, or a reversed escutcheon; and shall not one who profeseth himself a citizen of the New Jerusalem, have so much of a generous and noble sense of true honour, as to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called, and the dignity to which he is advanced? *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine,*^c was part of the lesson that Solomon's mother taught him. Brutal excesses profane a crown, and defile the horn in the dust: and are not Christians advanced to be kings and priests? It is not then for Christians, who are baptized, it is not for Christians, who wear so honourable a name, to walk as other Gentiles walk. We shame ourselves before God and the world, if we, who by baptism are made members of that family which is named of Jesus Christ,^d its illustrious head, do that which is unbecoming the family.

2. In point of honesty.

An honest man will be as good as his word. Having sworn, we must perform it; and having given up our names, we must not withdraw them. It is the character of a citizen of Zion, that *he sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not*; much less when he sweareth so much to his own good.

Jephthah argues himself into a very hard piece

^a John vii. 17.

^b Phil. i. 27.

^c Prov. xxxi. 4.

^d Eph. iii. 15.

of self-denial from this topic, (Judg. xi. 35.) *I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and cannot go back. How shall we?* Rom. vi. 2.

3. In point of interest.

Be not deceived, God is not mocked. He will not be put off with shows and shadows. Baptism not improved, is no baptism, any more than the carcass is the man. Nominal Christianity is but real hypocrisy; the form without the power; the name without the thing. *He is not a Jew (nor he a Christian) that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision (nor that baptism) which is outward in the flesh.*^e The gospel is preached, either *for a witness to us,*^f or (if that witness be not received) *for a witness against us:*^g and so our baptism, instead of being a witness to us, if we neglect it, will be a witness against us. In the day of vengeance, Judah and Israel, become uncircumcised in heart, are set abreast with the rest of the uncircumcised nations, Jer. ix. 25, 26. Our baptism, if it be not improved, will be so far from saving us, that it will aggravate our condemnation. It is not *the putting away the filth of the flesh* that saves us, but *the answer of a good conscience towards God*; i. e. our conformity to our baptismal engagements. In early times, it was usual, in some churches, to lay up the white garment of the baptized, that it might be produced as an evidence against them, if they violated or denied that faith which they had owned in baptism.

A little further to illustrate this, let us consider,

1. That baptism is a *trust*, to which we must be faithful. *The profit of baptism* is answerable to the *profit of circumcision*. *To them were committed the oracles of God:*^h we are entrusted with the *lively oracles*; the sacred laws of the kingdom of heaven; which if we misuse by an unsuitable conversation, we betray a trust.

2. Baptism is a *talent*, which must be traded with, and accounted for. It is a price put into the hand to get wisdom; and with this, as with other talents, the charge is, *Occupy till I come*. By working upon our souls a sense of the obligations we are laid under by our baptism, we put this talent into the *bank*, and, if we were not wanting to ourselves, might receive from it the blessed *usury*, of a great deal of comfort and holiness. I refer to Matt. xxv. 27.

3. Baptism is a *privilege*, which must be improved. It takes us into the visible church; makes us denizens of that ancient and honourable corporation; and entitles us to its external privileges; *the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises*, (Rom. ix. 4.) privileges capable of a great improvement.

4. Baptism is a *profession*, which must be lived up

to. By baptism we profess relation to Christ, as *scholars to our teacher, servants to our master, soldiers to our captain, subjects to our sovereign;*ⁱ which relations call for duty which must be done. The law of nature, and the common sense of mankind, require, that we *be and do* according to our profession; and not profess one thing and practise another.

5. Baptism is an *obligation*, which must be performed. It is the seal of a bond. We are in bonds to God; penal bonds, to be the Lord's; which if we break, we expose ourselves to the penalty.

6. Baptism is an *oath*, which must be made good. A *sacrament* is a military oath; an oath of allegiance, to be true and faithful to the Lord Jesus; and having *sworn*, we must *perform it*.^j An oath is a tie upon conscience: and this is an oath, to which God is not only a witness, (as to every oath,) but a party principally concerned: for to him are we sworn.

So then, if we do not make use of our baptism, we falsify a trust, we bury a talent, we abuse a privilege, we contradict a profession, we break a sacred bond in sunder, despise an oath, and cast away from us the cords of an everlasting covenant.

II. I am to give some general rules for the improvement of our baptism. And,

1. We must rightly apprehend the perpetual obligation of our baptismal covenant. That time does not wear out the strength of it: though it was administered long ago, yet (being a *specialty*, a bond sealed) it binds as firmly as if we had been baptized but yesterday. God was highly provoked by the breach of a covenant made with the Gideonites many ages before, 2 Sam. xxi. 2.

Baptism is an oath of allegiance, which no power on earth can absolve us from. It is a *perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten*.^k God will not forget it, and we must not forget it: the former may comfort us, the latter quicken us. Compare two parallel scriptures, viz. 1 Chron. xvi. 15. *Be ye mindful always of his covenant, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations*, borrowed from Ps. cv. 8. but there it is, *He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations*; both put together, speak the perpetuity of the covenant. God doth remember it for ever, and we must be always mindful of it. It is a covenant of salt, (2 Chron. xiii. 5.) an incorruptible, inviolable covenant, that is not, must not, cannot be disannulled. God is said to remember his covenant, when he brought his first-begotten into the world; it was to perform the oath, (Luke i. 72, 73.) though that oath was sworn many ages before. So what we do in religion we should do with a regard to our baptismal oath; in remembrance of the holy covenant, and in compliance with the purport and de-

^e Rom. ii. 25, 28, 29. ^f Matt. xxiv. 14. ^g Mark xlii. 9.

^h Rom. iii. 2.

ⁱ Ps. cxix. 106.

^k Jer. l. 5.

sign of it. Upon some special occasions, God remembers his covenant; as when, after a controversy, he returns in ways of mercy, Lev. xxvi. 42. So upon special occasions, of trouble or temptation, or after we have fallen into sin, we should remember the covenant; which still stands in full force, power, and virtue. The superadding of repeated engagements to the same purpose, at the Lord's table; or upon other occasions, doth not supersede, but strengthen and confirm, that first and great engagement; and the design of those renewed covenantings, is to revive the sense of that early bond. God remembers *the kindness of our youth, and the love of our espousals,*¹ and we must not forget the covenant of our youth, and the vow of our espousals.

2. It is very good, when we grow up to years of understanding, solemnly to renew our baptismal covenant; and to make that our own act and deed, which our parents, as the trustees of our wills, to act for our good, (appointed so by God and nature,) then did for us. This will help to make the engagement more sensible, and consequently give it a greater and stronger influence.

This should be done (I think) by a solemn personal profession of *assent* to the gospel revelation, and *consent* to the gospel covenant; with a serious promise of a suitable and agreeable conversation: and this to be approved by the minister, or such others as are fit to judge of the seriousness of it. This is to be looked upon as a transition from the state of *infant* church membership, to that of *adult*; and as a solemn investiture in the privileges of the adult: which (according to the practice of the primitive church) may not unfitly be done by the imposition of hands. This is what is commonly called *confirmation*; the revival of which, and its restoration to its original use, Mr. Baxter, in his book on that subject, doth learnedly and convincingly plead for. The corruptions and abuses of an ordinance are no reasons for its total abolition. But this is one of those things which are much desired, but little practised; for, in the usual administration of confirmation by the bishops, so little is done to answer the intention, (and how should it be otherwise, when the confirmation of so many thousands is put into the hands of one man?) that it is too apparent, that the substance is lost in the shadow, and the thing in the name. While every deacon hath authority to administer the great ordinance of baptism, and is thought fit to judge of the capable subjects of it, it is a riddle to me, why the subordinate constitution of confirmation should be so strictly appropriated to bishops. The recognition of the baptismal covenant, and the profession of faith, repentance, and a holy life, are fit to be made in the presence of those to whom the right hand of fellowship is to be given in settled

stated communion, or their representatives: and the investiture were most properly received from that pastor, who is to administer other ordinances, and through whose hands those external privileges of adult church membership are to be communicated.*

Where this is neglected, or negligently performed by the congregation, it is yet the duty of every one to do it, as far as possible, for himself in private; in the most solemn manner, as in the presence of God: the more expressly, the better; and it may add some strength to the engagement, to *subscribe with the hand unto the Lord.*^m

Our law requires, that he who is (*subditus natus*) born within the king's allegiance, and consequently to all intents and purposes the king's subject, shall, when he is of the age of twelve years, take an oath of allegiance, and promise that, to which he was bound before, viz. to be true and faithful to the king, (Co. Inst. i. 68. b. 172. b.) and this oath to be taken among the neighbours in the leet, or in the sheriff's town. I would compare the confirmation I am pleading for to this. It is the solemn profession of that allegiance which was before due to Christ, and an advancement to a higher rank in his kingdom.

The sooner this recognition is made, the better. Youth is quickly capable of impressions; and the more early the impressions are, usually they are the more deep and durable.

3. We must rightly understand the nature of the ordinance, and acquaint ourselves with it.

It is a seal of the covenant of grace: we should therefore know the promises and privileges which God seals to us, and the conditions which we seal back to him. How many baptized persons are there, who are altogether *strangers to the covenant of promise!* who look upon baptism only as a thing of course; nothing more than the custom of the country! No wonder they do not improve that which they do not understand. Baptism being the badge of our profession, to understand that, is to understand our holy religion; the nature, duties, privileges, and designs of it; to all of which our baptism doth some way or other refer. It is sad to consider what ignorance of these reigns, even in the Christian world; and how many are little better than baptized heathens.

The apostle Paul several times presseth holiness and sanctification, from the consideration of the design and tendency of our baptism. Let us examine two or three particular passages, and make some improvement of them.

The first is, Rom. vi. 3. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?* This he urgeth as a known confessed truth. The nature of our baptism, and the engagement it lays upon us, is a thing which it is a shame

¹ Jer. ii. 2.

^m Isa. xlv. 5.

* See an instance of this confirmation in its primitive simplicity, in the life of Sir Nathaniel Bernardiston.

for Christians to be ignorant of. As if a soldier should not know the meaning of his being enlisted. We were baptized into *Jesus Christ*—*εἰς Χριστόν*, as *εἰς Μωσῆν*—unto Moses, 1 Cor. x. 2.

But how are we baptized into the death of Jesus Christ? I answer, we may be said to be baptized into Christ's death, upon a threefold account.

1. As baptism is a professing ordinance; a sign and token of our Christianity. *By* and *in* baptism we profess,

(1.) To believe the death of Christ as a fact. It is one of the main hinges upon which the door of salvation turns, one great article of our creed, that he was crucified and dead. We profess to believe, (and it is no small matter to believe it,) that he *could* die. It was not possible that he should be holden by the pains of death; how then was it possible that he should be seized, and taken by them? It implies the belief of his incarnation; for if he had not been man, he could not have died. And that he *did* die; was willing to make his soul an offering for sin. And certainly, that the Lord of life should die for the children of death, the offended Prince for the unnatural rebel, the just for the unjust, is such a mystery, as requires a great faith to receive: which we do in baptism accordingly profess. And there is no need of the sign of the cross in token of that profession; the instituted ordinance is sufficiently expressive of our being baptized into Christ's death, without the invented ceremony.

(2.) To depend upon the death of Christ as our righteousness. In baptism we profess our expectation to be saved by the blood of a crucified Jesus; and to hope for heaven, in, and by, that new and living way, which is laid open for us through the veil of his flesh. We entertain the gospel revelation concerning Christ's death, not only as a *faithful saying*, but as *worthy of all acceptation*. We profess an approbation of, and a complacency in, the method which infinite wisdom took, of saving a guilty world, by the cross of Christ. It was the cross of Christ which was *to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*;^a and therefore an owning of that, is justly made so material a point in Christianity.

2. As baptism is a receiving ordinance.

We are baptized into Christ's death; i. e. God doth in that ordinance seal, confirm, and make over to us, all the benefits of the death of Christ. All our privileges, both those of our way, and those of our home, are the fruits of his cross; the purchase of his blood; and in baptism are conferred upon us, on the terms of the gospel: so that if we fulfil the condition, we may expect the privileges; e. g. pardon of sin, access with boldness to a throne of grace, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the heavenly inheritance.

3. As baptism is an engaging ordinance.

We are baptized into Christ's death: i. e. we are obliged by our baptism,

(1.) To comply with the design of his death; and this in gratitude for the privileges purchased by it. Christ died *to save us from sin,*^b *to redeem us from all iniquity,*^c *from our vain conversation*;^d the intention of his death was not only to justify, but to sanctify: now, by baptism, we oblige ourselves to join in with this design of Christ; to set ourselves against that which he died to kill, and that is sin, and to press after that which he died to advance, and that is holiness.

(2.) To conform to the pattern of his death.

Christ's dying for sin, was intended to be the pattern of our dying to sin: so the apostle explains it in the following words (v. 4—6.) *We are planted together* (*τὸ σὺνσπυρῆσαι*) *in the likeness*; it notes not merely a similitude, but a conformity; and that procured, and wrought, by the virtue and efficacy of Christ's death. Hence the mortifying of sin is called *crucifying it*; (Gal. v. 24.) a slow but a sure death: and we are said to be *crucified with Christ*, (Gal. ii. 20.) because of the influence which his death hath upon the mortification of sin. Christ rose to die no more, rose and left his grave-clothes behind him; that is the pattern of our living to righteousness: as his death is the pattern of our dying to sin: see both together, Phil. iii. 10. *The power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings*. We should from hence take instruction how to improve our baptism. *as we have received Christ, so we must walk in him*. We have received Christ crucified, and so we must walk in him: being baptized into his death, we must bear about with us continually the dying of the Lord Jesus.^e If ministers must preach, people must live, as those who know nothing but *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. Think for what end Christ died, and you were baptized into his death; and use it as an aggravation of sin, as an answer to temptation, and as an assistant to faith; use it for the crucifying of corruption, for the constraining of you to holiness, and for your comfort in all your sorrows. Again,

That of the apostle in the next words, and Col. ii. 12. are to the same purpose; *we are buried with him by baptism*. In which, whether there be an allusion to the custom of dipping or plunging, in baptism, is not at all material; (if there be, it is but an allusion;) the meaning is plainly this: that by our baptism we are obliged to conform to the burial and resurrection of Christ, in our sanctification, dying to sin, and living to righteousness; putting off the old man, and putting on the new man. We are by baptism buried with Christ,

[1.] As baptism signifies and seals our ingrafting into Christ, and our union with him. We are, in Christ our head, buried by baptism, and raised

^a 1 Cor. i. 22.

^b Matt. i. 21.

^c Tit. ii. 14.

^d 1 Pet. i. 15.

^e Eph. v. 25, 26.

^f 2 Cor. iv. 10.

gain; he the first-fruits, and we the lump. Our sins are said to have been *laid upon Christ*, and he to *we borne them in his own body*, (1 Pet. ii. 24.) so that when he was buried, our sins were put into the same grave, and buried with him. Therefore they are not imputed to us, being dead and buried with Christ. Thus was sin, by Christ's sacrifice, *condemned*.^c But he rose again, not in *the likeness of sinful flesh*; he did not bear our sins in his glorified body. Now baptism signifies, and seals, our fellowship with Christ, in his sufferings and resurrection; viz. our freedom from the condemning and commanding power of sin. He is our second Adam, the common father, agent, root, and representative of all true believers. Baptism, therefore, being the sign of our union with him, we are said therein to die, and be buried, and rise again, with Christ.

[2.] As baptism signifies and seals our engagement to be the Lord's.

We are, by our baptismal covenant, obliged to mortify sin, and in baptism receive the promise of the Holy Ghost for that purpose. *We are buried by baptism*; i. e. we are, in profession, and obligation, quite separated and cut off from sin; as those who are not only dead, but buried, are quite parted from the living, and have no more any intercourse, correspondence, or fellowship, with them. We are likewise *risen again* to another sort of life; a divine and heavenly life. Not as the widow's son and Lazarus were raised, to live just such a life as they lived before; but as Christ was raised, who, though he continued on earth forty days after his resurrection, did not show himself openly, nor converse with this world as he had done; but his life was altogether heavenly, and no more in the world: thus, our baptism, obliging us to die to sin, and live to righteousness, we may be said therein to be buried and risen with Jesus Christ.

A Christian, therefore, who is by baptism buried with Christ, and yet lives in sin, is like a walking host; or the frightful motion of a dead body. We should often remember, that we are *buried*, i. e. cut off from a life of sin, and *risen*, i. e. entered upon a life of holiness. We should therefore see to it, (saith the excellent Davenant,) that what is done once sacramentally, in baptism, should be always done really, in the life.

I shall only produce one passage more, viz. Gal. ii. 27. *As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ*. The design of the apostle's discourse there, is to bring them nearer, and bind them faster, to Jesus Christ. The two great rivals to Christ were, the works of sin, and the works of the law: the former, his rival as the Lord their *Ruler*; the latter, as the Lord their *Righteousness*. From both these, he is here industriously

dissuading them; and he argues from their baptism, *being baptized into Christ, ye have put on Christ*; ye have done it; i. e. you have professed to do it, and consequently are obliged to do it. *Put on Christ*, that is,

1. The righteousness of Christ for justification. Put it on, as Jacob put on the garments of his elder brother, when he came for the blessing; as the high priest put on the appointed robes, when he went in to make atonement. To put on the righteousness of Christ is,

(1.) To consent to it; willing and glad to be saved by that righteousness, which he, by dying, hath brought in. This is to *receive the atonement*.^a The garment is already prepared; made up of Christ's merits, dyed with his blood: glorious apparel! it is our consent that puts it on. This is called, *buying the white raiment*, Rev. iii. 18. Upon our believing submission to the methods of gospel grace, and entertaining that faithful saying as worthy of all acceptance, Jesus Christ is made of God unto us *righteousness*,^c and we are made *the righteousness of God in him*.^d

(2.) To confide in it. We must be putting it on every day, in all our approaches to God, making mention of Christ's *righteousness, even of that only*;^e abiding by it as our plea; casting anchor there; laying the stress of our souls upon this foundation. The most of men are putting on other things; some righteousness of their own; at best *a covering too narrow to wrap themselves in*;^f but we who are baptized into Christ, profess to put on Christ; that *Sun* with which the church is *clothed*;^g that *best robe*;^h that *broidered work*.ⁱ

2. The spirit and grace of Christ, for sanctification. Grace is often compared to clothing. This is that *fine linen*, clean and white, Rev. xix. 8. With this we must be clothed, as the earth with grass and corn; which are not only *adherent*, but *inherent*. Thus we must *put on charity*, (Col. iii. 14.) *mercies*, (Col. iii. 12.) *humility*, (1 Pet. v. 5.) and in general, *the new man*, (Eph. iv. 24.) the same with putting on Christ, Rom. xiii. 14. compare v. 13. To put on the grace of Christ, is to get the habit of it planted in our souls, and the acts of it quickened and invigorated: to have grace, and to use grace. To have the disposition, and not to exercise it, is like having clothes lying by us, and not wearing them.

In baptism we have put on Christ; i. e. have professed and promised it. Whether the custom of putting a white garment upon the person baptized, was so ancient, as that we may suppose an allusion to that, is not material; I suppose rather, that this custom might, in after ages, take rise from this scripture.

Christ is here compared to clothing; for,

^c Rom. viii. 3. ^a Rom. v. 11. ^v 1 Cor. i. 30.
^w 2 Cor. v. 21. ^x Ps. lxxi. 16.

^y Is. xxviii. 20. ^r Rev. xii. 1.
^a Luke xv. 22. ^b Ezek. xvi. 10.

1. Clothes are for decency. Sin made us *naked*, Christ covers our *shame*.^c Again, clothes are for distinction.^d Christians are distinguished from other men by their putting on Christ. Hereby it is known what country they belong to; grace is their livery, their badge, their cognizance. Further, clothes are for *dignity*. And this is honourable clothing; recommends us to God; (which no other clothing doth;) it is clothing of *wrought gold*,^e in the sight of God of great price. And once more, clothes are for *defence*. We must put on Christ, not only as attire, but as armour; nothing else will keep us safe from the *wind and the tempest*,^f and the *fiery darts of the wicked one*.^g

Having thus put on Christ in profession, let us do it in truth and sincerity; having begun to put him on, let us be doing it daily more and more; for that is to improve our baptism.

Baptism doth not work as a spell, or charm, or by any physical influence; but it acts as a motive, or argument, by moral agency; and we then make use of our baptism, when we improve that argument with ourselves, for our quickening, caution, and encouragement, as there is occasion. That which shakes many in the doctrine of infant baptism, is the uselessness (as they apprehend) of the administration, and the mighty advantages which they fancy in adult baptism. But before they conclude thus, they would do well to answer Dr. Ford's proof of this truth, "That there is much more advantage to be made, in order to sanctification, consolation, and several other ways, of the doctrine and practice of infant baptism, than of that doctrine and practice, which limits baptism to personal profession at years of discretion." And it is to be feared, that the neglect of the improvement of infant baptism hath very much conducted to the opposition that hath been made to it.

Baptism is a good motive to be improved,

1. By ministers, in preaching to their people. By this we have some hold of them. It is especially to be improved in dealing with young people. We have this to say to them, that being baptized, they are of the fold; lambs of the flock which we are to feed. We have this to say, against their youthful lusts, and for their early piety, that they are baptized, and are thereby laid under special obligations to be the Lord's. This is to be much insisted upon in training up children in the way wherein they should go. It is improvable, in our dealing with them, about their first conversion and return to God, and their after growth and progress in holiness. In treating with souls, we generally find it easier to direct than to persuade, to tell people what they should do than to prevail with them to do it; we have need to choose out words to reason with them:

therefore those are poor friends to the success of the word, who rob us of that argument which infant baptism puts into our hands.

2. By people in preaching to themselves. The apostle saith, (*παρακαλεῖτε εαυτους*, Heb. iii. 13.) *Exhort yourselves*, reason the case with yourselves, press things upon your own hearts; and, among the rest, we should press upon ourselves the consideration of our infant baptism, and be ever mindful of the covenant, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. I am now,

III. To mention some particular instances wherein it is our duty to improve our baptism: and under each, I shall endeavour to urge the consideration of our baptism, especially as administered in infancy.

We ought to improve our baptism several ways.

1. Baptism, especially infant baptism, is to be improved, as a restraint from all manner of sin. While we are in an insnaring world, we lie continually exposed to temptation. A malicious spirit lays the plot, and a deceitful heart closes in with it; and thus the poor soul is drawn away, and enticed. These temptations are to be opposed, and resisted; all the powers of the soul must be summoned in to the resistance; and the consideration of our baptism, especially our infant baptism, would very much engage us to that resistance, and make it both vigorous and victorious. I say the consideration,

1. Of our baptism.

When we are tempted to be proud, or passionate, or intemperate, or unjust, or the like, then to remember that we were baptized, would be of excellent use, to silence and repel the temptation. Considering,

(1.) That sin is a contradiction to our profession. In baptism, we were solemnly admitted visible church members, and so took upon us the profession of Christ's holy and excellent religion: by wilful sin we give the lie to that profession, and run counter to it. We then put on Christ; and shall we put on our filthy rags again? Is this to walk as becomes the gospel? Is this to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and to answer that worthy name by which we are called? By baptism, we profess ourselves *dead unto sin*; cut off, and separated, from that life; and *how then shall we live any longer therein?*^h *How shall we?* how can we for shame, so far contradict our profession, and walk contrary to the vocation wherewith we are called?

(2.) That sin is a reproach to our relation.

In baptism, we were admitted into that *family*, which is named from Christ,ⁱ its illustrious head; taken to be his *servants*; nay, (because the *servant abideth not in the house for ever*,) we have received

^c Gen. iii. 7.

^d Ps. xlv. 13.

^e Rev. iii. 18.

^f Isa. xxxii. 2.

^g Eph. vi. 16.

^h Eph. iii. 15.

ⁱ Rom. vi. 2.

the adoption of sons; we are enlisted under Christ's banner, and become his soldiers; are entered into his school, and call him Master (*διδασκαλος*) and Lord; and doth it become those who stand in such relations, to maintain a friendly intercourse with Christ's avowed enemy? How unbecoming is it for those who profess such a friendship for Christ, to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness! *for what communion is there between Christ and Belial? Holiness becomes God's house,*^k and household; his servants, and service: how unbecoming then is unholiness? If, indeed, we had never been put into such relations, it had been another matter; there had been at least not *that* evil in our sin: but after we have engaged to follow Christ as his servants and soldiers, shall we run our colours, and return to our old master? When we are tempted to sin, let us think we hear Christ saying to us, as to the twelve, *Will ye also go away?*^l you, my friends, and followers? (*Και ου ρεινον*;) What thou, my son? as Cæsar to Brutus. *Thou, a man mine equal, mine acquaintance?* as the Psalmist, Ps. lv. 13.

(3.) That sin is an ill requital of our privileges. They were precious privileges which were sealed to us in baptism; the privileges of the gospel charter, the heavenly corporation; all the inestimable benefits of the covenant of grace; protection from arrests, an interest in the promises, free access to God, and the special tokens of his favour: *and do we thus requite the Lord?*^m Shall we sin against so much love, preventing love, distinguishing love? Shall we *despise such riches of grace?*ⁿ The least spark of true generosity would abhor such ingratitude.

(4.) That sin is a breach of our baptismal engagements. We were then sealed, and bound, to be the Lord's; and shall we be so prodigiously unruly, as to break such sacred bonds in sunder, and cast away such cords of love from us? When a temptation to sin comes, answer it with that of the psalmist, *thy vows are upon me, O God!*^o not upon me as a burthen, which I am weary of, but upon me as a bond, which I am obliged by. The covenant we were entered into, was most reasonable; the engagement just; it was but a confirmation of our former ties: and shall we falsify such engagements? Be not deceived, God is not mocked: therefore *vow and pay.*^p

2. Of our infant baptism.

There is something in baptism, as administered in infancy, the consideration whereof would furnish us with a particular answer to temptation. The argument taken from our baptism, is so far from being less cogent for its infant administration, that it is really more so. Baptism engageth us in a quarrel with sin, but infant baptism with the grounds of it, doth hugely strengthen the engagement. For,

1. Infant baptism speaks our engagement in an *early* quarrel with sin.

We were betimes enlisted under Christ's banner; were from the cradle *buried with him in baptism*; and thereby engaged, that *sin should not have dominion over us.*^q The early date of our covenants should very much strengthen the obligation of them. Shall I love that enemy, and lay it in my bosom, which I did so soon declare war against? When God would stir up himself to show kindness to Israel, he makes mention of his early friendship to them; *remembers the kindness of their youth,*^r *his love to Israel when a child.*^s When we would stir up ourselves to strive against sin, we should remember our early quarrel with it, our infant covenants against it. The strongest antipathies are those conceived from infancy; usually not afterwards removable; but taking rise so soon, become rooted in our nature. Such should our antipathy to sin be; and having been so early engaged against it, we should *early destroy it.*^t This is a good argument for children to use against sin; that young as they are, they have long been bound in a bond against sin. We who plead with God *his loving-kindness of old*^u to us, should plead with ourselves our engagements of old to him. This early engagement against sin should especially curb and cure that vanity, to which childhood and youth are subject. Austin observes it as a very ill consequence of the careless deferring of children's baptism till they grow up, that in youth the reins were the more let loose.^v

2. Infant baptism speaks our engagement in an *hereditary* quarrel with sin.

It is not only a personal quarrel, espoused by ourselves, and no older than our own day, but it is an enmity entailed upon us by our ancestors; a hostility which came to us by descent. When our parents brought us to baptism, they did by us, as Hannibal's father did by him: when he was but a child of nine years old, he made him solemnly swear, with his hand upon the altar, to pursue the Romans with immortal hatred, and to do them all the mischief he could. Which, however justly reckoned inhuman and barbarous, in a quarrel between man and man, is a project truly pious between man and sin: to bequeath a hatred as by legacy. Our godly parents, who found sin such an enemy to themselves, did thereby lay an obligation upon us, to prosecute an eternal war against it, without thought of reconciliation or truce. Let us think then, when we are tempted to sin, was sin my father's enemy as well as my own? Is the quarrel with it of so long a standing, and shall I submit to it? Was the covenant of my ancestors against it, and shall I make a league with it; or ever entertain a good thought of that, which my parents did so much to set me against?

^k Ps. xciii. 4. ^l John vi. 67. ^m Deut. xxxii. 6.
ⁿ Rom. ii. 4. ^o Ps. lvi. 12. ^p Eccl. v. 4, 5.

^q Rom. vi. 4, 12. ^r Jer. ii. 2. ^s Hos. xi. 1.
^t Pa. ci. 8. ^u Pa. xxv. 6. ^v Confea. lib. i. cap. 11.

Infant baptism implies such a war with sin, as Israel, by divine appointment, was engaged in against Amalek, a war *from generation to generation*; ^w and therefore *no peace with it*; ^x *no pity to be showed it*; *nothing that belongs to it spared*.^y An hereditary quarrel must needs be inveterate.

3. Infant baptism speaks our engagement in a quarrel with *original sin*; which is the unhappy root and source of all the rest.

Baptism, at riper age, doth indeed bear a testimony against sin, but it gives no particular evidence, as infant baptism doth, against original corruption. Baptism tells us, indeed, that we are filthy; but infant baptism tells us that we are polluted from the beginning, *conceived in sin*.^z Baptism in infancy particularly obligeth us to lay the axe to the root; that carnal mind, which is enmity against God. It leads us to the spring-head of these polluted streams, and directs us to employ all our care for the drying up of that. Would we see our own faces by nature? they are best seen in the waters of baptism: in them we behold ourselves *transgressors from the womb*; ^a and are thereby obliged to employ our forces against that sin that dwelleth in us; to put off *the old man, which is corrupt*; to curb the vicious propensity, and to *crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts*.

Let us therefore make this use of our baptism, our infant baptism; having in profession put on *the armour of light, let us put off the works of darkness. My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not*.^b

2. Baptism, especially infant baptism, is to be improved as an incentive to duty.

As we are Christians, we have not only temptations to be resisted, and sins to be avoided, but work to be done; great and necessary work, for God and our souls, and eternity. We were not sent into the world to be idle, or (like leviathan into the deep) to play therein. All the creatures were *created to work*; (as some understand Gen. ii. 3. *קָרָא לְעֹמֵל*) much more Christians, who are *created anew*, and that to *good works*.^c We must *work the works of him that sent us*. Now nothing can more quicken us to that work, than a lively sense of our relation to the Lord Jesus Christ as his servants; *truly, I am thy servant*.^d To maintain that sense, and to excite us to an answerable diligence in our duty, we should frequently consider our baptism; especially our infant baptism.^e

1. Our baptism: which was the rite of admission into the relation of servants.

(1.) In baptism we were taken into our Master's

family, and owned as members of it. It was the solemn recognition of our rights, as born in our Master's house. Our Lord Jesus, by that right of investiture, duly administered according to his appointment, did declare, that he took us into the number of his menial servants; and do you think we were taken into the relation for no purpose? Our Master (who was himself so very busy when he took upon him the form of a servant) keeps no servants in his family to be idle: the glorious angels that attend immediately upon his person, have work to do.

(2.) In baptism, we put on our Master's livery: it is the badge of our profession. We have put on Christ; i. e. we have done it in profession; are called Christians (a name full both of honour and obligation) from Christ our head. Now, shall we wear our Master's livery, and neglect our Master's work? This livery is our honour; we need not be ashamed of it; let us not, by our slothfulness, be a shame to it.

(3.) In baptism we obliged ourselves to do our Master's work. It is a bond upon the soul. A covenant like that of Josiah's, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31. *To walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies*. When we begin to loiter, and spiritual sloth takes off our chariot wheels, let this help to quicken us, that in baptism we took the yoke of Christ upon us, and that we were not yoked to play, but to work.

(4.) In baptism we accepted our Master's wages. We had in that ordinance the privileges of the new covenant sealed to us; and we took them as our recompence, and earnest of more. We consented to trust God for a happiness out of sight, as the full reward of all our services, according to the tenor of the new covenant. Seeing then we have thus signified, and acknowledged, our expectation of *a kingdom that cannot be moved*, shall we not *serve God with reverence and godly fear*?

2. Our baptism, as administered in infancy, doth very much strengthen the engagement; and may help to quicken our dulness, and put us forward, when we begin to loiter. Our infant baptism doth bespeak our Master to be,

(1.) Our rightful Master. We are his by the first title, prior to all Satan's claims and pretensions; *truly his servants*,^f for we were born in his house. If our engagements to him had been only the result of our own choice, we might have been tempted to think, that a recantation would dissolve the obligation: but we are the Lord's by a former dedication; and if afterwards we join ourselves to the citizens of

^w Ex. xvii. 16. ^x Deut. xxv. 19. ^y 1 Sam. xv. 3. ^z Psal. li. 5.

^a Isa. xlviii. 8. ^b 1 John ii. 1. ^c Eph. ii. 10. ^d Pa. cxvi. 16.

^e See 2 Pet. i. 9. *He that lacketh these things, (viz. the graces before mentioned, that is barren and unfruitful, v. 8.) is blind, and cannot see afar off, (ληθη, λαβων τε καθαρισμου των παλαι αυτου αμαρ-*

των,) forgetting that he received (viz. in baptism) a cleansing, or purification from his old sins: whence note, that forgetfulness of our baptism is at the bottom of all our barrenness, and unfruitfulness, and deficiency, in that which is good.

^f Pa. cxvi. 16.

the country, it is our own fault. The first conveyance stands, and cannot be invalidated by a subsequent deed; for there was no clause to reserve a power of revocation

(2.) Our kind Master. Kind indeed, who would take us into his family, and admit us to the protection, provision, and privileges of his family, when we were incapable of doing him any actual service. Being now grown up, this consideration should quicken us to a double diligence: that we may redeem the time lost when we were children, and make some grateful returns to our generous Master, for the early tokens of his good will. *When Israel was a child, then I loved him;*^f and shall not we then study what we shall render for that love? It was our Landlord's kindness then to put our lives into the lease, and we are basely ungrateful if we now refuse to do the services, or are dissatisfied with them.

(3.) Our old Master. We have been long in his service; from our very infancy: we were born in his service; and shall we now draw back from, or drive on heavily in, his work? Shall we begin to tire now, and lose the things we have obtained? David pleads with God, (Ps. lxxi. 17, 18.) *Thou hast taught me from my youth up; and we should plead it with ourselves.* Sober servants love an old service, which they have been long trained up in. Were not our ears bored to the door-post, to serve for ever? and shall we fly off from our work now?

(4.) Our father's Master: one whom our fathers served, and recommended to us for a Master. Infant baptism speaks an hereditary relation to God, that comes to us by descent: my God, and *my fathers' God.*^g Our fathers found him a good Master, and consigned us over to him, and to his service: shall we then neglect our duty, or be negligent in it? It is Paul's profession, (Acts xxiv. 14.) *So worship I the God of my fathers. Thy own Friend, and thy fathers' Friend, forget not; thy own Master, and thy fathers' Master, forsake not.* The way of religion is the good old way, in which they walked who are gone before us. Idolaters, and evil-doers, are strengthened in their wicked way by this, that it was the way of their fathers. *We will do as we have done; we and our fathers.*^h *A vain conversation is received by tradition from their fathers.*ⁱ For which reason it is, that the iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children. And shall not we be much more confirmed in the ways of God, from the practice and resolution of our fathers; whose covenant was, that not they only, but *their houses, would serve the Lord?* Though that which is bad is never the better, yet I am sure, that which is good is never the worse, but the more inviting, for its being received from our ancestors. Let us not therefore be weary in well-doing, but always abide, and always abound, in the work of the Lord.

3. Baptism, especially infant baptism, is to be improved by us, as a strong inducement to repent of sin.

As we should improve our baptism to prevent our fall; so, when we are fallen, we should improve it to help us up again. Repentance is (as far as possible) the unsaying, and the undoing, of that which we have said and done amiss. It is a retraction. The law of repentance is a remedial law; a plank thrown out after shipwreck: and blessed be God, that the covenant of grace leaves room for repentance: the covenant of works did not.

In repentance, we should improve,

1. Our baptism. And we shall find in it,

(1.) A strong engagement to repent, in our part of the covenant.

John's baptism, which made way for Christ's, was *the baptism of repentance.*^k The apostles were sent to preach *repentance*, and to *that baptism* were annexed; *Repent, and be baptized.*^l Our baptism engageth us, not only to the first repentance from dead works, but to an after repentance, as there is occasion. Our first washing in the laver of baptism, obligeth us every day to *wash our feet*^m from the pollutions we contract. Our covenant was, not to sin; but if we should sin, to repent. Impenitency is the most direct falsifying of our baptismal covenant that can be; it is against the prescribed method of cure.

(2.) A sweet encouragement to repent, in God's part of the covenant.

In this covenant both parties are engaged, God to us, and we to God. We have obliged ourselves (as in duty bound) to repent; God has been pleased to oblige himself (as in grace and mercy inclined) to forgive upon repentance. So that baptism is a continued seal of our pardon upon repentance: an assurance, that if we be truly sorry for what we have done, and will come and confess it, and do so no more, all shall be well; iniquity shall not be our ruin. *Repent, and be ye baptized, for the remission of sins:*ⁿ not for the purchase of remission; that is Christ's work, and was done before, when the *everlasting righteousness was brought in*; but for the possession and application of it, which are daily needed. *Let us therefore draw near with boldness, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*^o Baptismal washing, as it assures us of the pardon of sin upon repentance, purgeth us from an evil conscience. *Repent therefore, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;*^p i. e. the gospel dispensation, the promise of pardon upon repentance. While the hue and cry is out against the malefactor, he flies, but the proclamation of pardon brings him in. *This kingdom of God is come nigh unto us*; it was in baptism applied to us in particular, that the encouragement might be past dispute.

^f Hos. xi. 1. ^g Exod. xv. 2. ^h Jer. xliiv. 17.
ⁱ 1 Pet. i. 18. ^k Luke iii. 3.

^l Acts ii. 38. ^m John xliii. 10. ⁿ Acts ii. 38.
^o Heb. x. 22. ^p Matt. iv. 17.

2. Our infant baptism.

There is much in the consideration of our baptism as administered in infancy, to strengthen this inducement to repent. Can I do otherwise than melt into tears of godly sorrow, when I reflect that I was baptized in infancy? For if so, then,

(1.) By sin I have ill requited God's early kindness to me. I have offended my God, and the God of my fathers, who, upon my parents' account, dealt so favourably with me. It is often mentioned, as an aggravation of sin, that it is against the God of our fathers: thus, 2 Chron. vii. 22. *Because they have forsaken the God of their fathers; so, 2 Chron. xxviii. 6.* God hath been kind to my family, to my ancestors before me; how sinful then must my sin needs be, which hath put an affront upon such a friend? besides that I was then taken into covenant with God myself, and owned in a covenant relation. God aggravates the sin of Israel, from the consideration of his early kindness to them, Ezek. xvi. 8, &c. especially his early covenant with them. *Loved when a child, and yet revolting, and dealing treacherously!*¹ When we were polluted, and exposed, then regarded, pitied, taken up, washed, adorned, taken into covenant, adopted into a good family; and was not that a time of love? love sealed, love ensured, preventing love, unmerited love? What! and yet despise such rich love, spurn at such bowels? *Do ye thus requite the Lord? Is this thy kindness to thy friend?* How should we charge this home upon our souls in our repentance, and blush for our ingratitude! *Nourished, and brought up, and yet rebelling!*²

(2.) By sin I have falsified my early engagements to him. Born in his house, brought up in his family, brought betimes under his law, and yet shaking off the yoke, and bursting the bonds! Did God take me into covenant with himself, when I was a child, and look upon me ever since as a covenanter; and yet, no sooner have I been able to go, than I have gone from him? to speak, than I have spoken to his dishonour? Aggravate sin from this topic; that there hath been in it, not only such base ingratitude, but such horrid perjury. This consideration is especially seasonable, when we are made to *possess the iniquities of our youth;*³ and are praying with David, *O remember not those early sins.*⁴ Those who are not baptized till years of discretion, have no such considerations to humble them for the sinful vanities of childhood and youth, as they have who were baptized in their infancy. Let this therefore break our hearts for the sins of our youth, that they were violations of our infant covenant; than which how can there be greater disingenuity?

4. We are to improve our baptism, especially our infant baptism, as a great support to our faith.

q Hos. xi. 1—3. r Deut. xxxii. 6. s Isa. i. 2, 3.
t Job xlii. 26. u Ps. xxv. 7. v Heb. lii. 12.

Unbelief is the sin that doth *most easily beset us*: there are remainders of it in the best; and it is at the bottom of our many sinful *departures from God.*¹ Even those who can say, *Lord, I believe,* have reason to add, *help my unbelief.*² Now, I say, it would be a special help against unbelief, to consider our baptism, especially our infant baptism.

1. Our baptism.

When we are tempted to distrust God, to question his good-will, and to think hardly of him, then let us recollect the covenant of grace, and our baptism, the seal thereof. Consider,

(1.) That by baptism we were admitted into covenant relations. God did then make over himself to us, to be our God; and take us to himself, to be his people; and shall we then ever distrust him? Relation is a great encouragement to dependence. See Ps. xxi. 2. *My refuge, my fortress, my God,* and then follows, *in him will I trust*; compare Ps. xviii. 2. As, by baptism, God hath hold of us when we depart from him, so, by baptism, we have hold of God when he seems to withdraw from us. It is an excellent support to faith, when we walk in darkness, and have no light, that we may stay ourselves upon *our God;*³ *ours* in covenant; ours, for he hath made himself over to us to be our God. Be not *dismayed* then, for he is *thy God.*⁴ Use this as an anchor of the soul in every storm; and whatever happens, keep hold of thy covenant relation to God: even then, when he seems to forsake, yet (as Christ upon the cross) maintain this post against all the assaults of Satan, that he is *my God; my God* for all this; and happy the people whose God is the Lord.

(2.) That by baptism we were interested in the promises of the covenant.

To visible church members now, as formerly, pertain the *covenants, and the promises;*⁵ to which others are *strangers.*⁶ When the evil heart of unbelief is doubting our immediate interest in the promises, faith may fetch in strength from the remoter interest; *Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant;*⁷ and that covenant, *ordered in all things, and sure.*

2. Our infant baptism. There is much in that to add to the encouragement; and to strengthen this prop, which faith finds in baptism to lean upon. Baptism seals the promise of God's being to me a God, and that is greatly encouraging; but infant baptism increaseth the encouragement, as it assures me of God's being the God of my fathers, and the God of my infancy.

(1.) The God of my fathers.

Shall I question the kindness of one who is my own friend, and my father's friend? the faithfulness of one, who was in covenant with my fathers, and always true to them? As it is an inducement to me to

w Mark ix. 24. x Isa. i. 10. y Isa. xli. 10.
z Rom. ix. 4. a Eph. ii. 12. b 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

choose God to be my God, because he was my fathers' God; so having chosen him, it must be very pleasing to reflect upon that hereditary covenant. Nay, when our own interest may be clouded, and eclipsed, it may bring some support and revival to the soul, to think of our fathers' interest. Peter mentions it as a great inducement to his hearers to believe, *Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with our fathers*, Acts iii. 25. God himself invites us to take hold of this, by fetching his reasons of mercy to his people from the covenant made with their fathers, (Lev. xxvi. 42.) *Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob*, &c. *The seed of Abraham his friend*^c must not be forsaken, cannot be forgotten. In the great work of our redemption, respect was had *unto the promise made unto our fathers*.^d Infant baptism, in the parents' right, speaks covenant mercy *kept for thousands; the word commanded to a thousand generations*; which, if seriously considered, hath a great deal in it to encourage faith. The saints have often been kept from sinking by this thought, *O Lord God of our fathers; our fathers trusted in thee*.^e

(2.) The God of my infancy.

It is a great support to faith, to consider, not only that God is my God, but that he was so betimes. How favourable was he in the admission, to accept of me upon my father's interest! He who took me when I was brought, surely will not cast me off when I come myself, though weak, and trembling, and unworthy. He who called me his own, because I was born in his house, though I was then too little to serve him; who then washed me, and clothed me, and entered into covenant with me, surely will not now reject and disown me, though I am still weak, and what I do is next to nothing. Preventing mercies are not only in themselves very obliging, but very encouraging to hope, in reference to further mercy: he who began in ways of love and mercy to me so early, will not now be wanting to me, or backward to do me good. See how David strengthens his faith from hence. (Ps. lxxv. 5, 6.) *Thou art my trust from my youth, by thee I have been holden up from the womb*. Loving-kindnesses, which have been *ever of old*, must needs be very favourable to faith and hope. God *remembers the days of old*,^f and we should remember those days.

5. We should improve our baptism, especially our infant baptism, as a special friend to prayer. God's people are, and should be, a praying people: *For this shall every one that is godly pray*, Ps. lxxii.

6. It is a duty to which we are naturally very backward; sinners plead the unprofitableness of it, (*What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?*^h) but sensible souls are convinced, not only of the *profit*, but

of the *necessity*, of it; not only that there is something to be gained by it, but that really there is no living without it. Prayer is the very breath of the new creature. Now, a due improvement of our baptism would greatly befriend us in this duty.

1. The consideration of our *baptism* would be of excellent use,

(1.) To bring us to the duty.

Baptism did signify and seal our dependence upon God, and our submission to him; both of which are in effect denied, and contradicted, if we live without prayer; either wholly neglect it, or frequently intermit it. *Restraining prayer*, is *casting off* that fear of God,^l which, in baptism, we assumed. In baptism, we took God for our God; and *should not a people seek unto their God?*^k natural light teacheth us to attend upon, with our prayers, that Being whom we call and own as a God.* Baptism put us into the relation of a people to God; which, while we live in the neglect of prayer, we refuse to stand to, and so forfeit its privileges. When we find our hearts backward to prayer; indifferent whether we pray or not, or degenerating into a lifeless formality, let us quicken them with this: Shall I give the lie to my baptism, and disown dependence upon that God, who then manifested such kindness? and whose I am by so solemn a covenant David often excites praying graces by similar means; *Thou art my God, early will I seek thee*.¹ Baptism is particularly an engagement to family worship: by that, we and ours were taken into covenant with God; therefore, *we and our households should serve the Lord*.^m

(2.) To imbolden us in the duty.

Slavish fear is a great enemy to prayer: takes off our chariot wheels; clips the wings of devotion. Baptism, if duly considered, will be a special remedy against that spirit of bondage, which stands in opposition to the spirit of adoption. It is a seal of our interest in God; and we may from thence, with the greater confidence, call God ours: and it is comfortable coming with an address to one in whom we have such an interest; one who is not *ashamed*ⁿ of his relation to us; but hath instituted an ordinance for the solemn avowal and recognition of it. *Let us therefore come boldly; draw near with a true heart, having our bodies washed*.^p Baptism is one special qualification that fits us for a confident approach to God: (as circumcision under the law:) by that, we were admitted into the relation of children, which should encourage us to improve the relation, by crying, *Abba, Father*.^o We were then enrolled among the seed of Jacob, to whom God never said, *Seek ye me in vain*.^q We were interested in the Mediator, who ever lives to make

^c Isa. xli. 8. ^d Luke i. 72, 73. ^e 2 Chron. xx. 6.
^f Ps. xxii. 4. ^g Isa. lxviii. 13.
^h Job xxii. 15. ⁱ Job xv. 4. ^k Isa. viii. 14.

* *Deus qui rogat, ille facit.*
^l Ps. lxxiii. 1.
^m Josh. xxiv. 14. ⁿ Heb. xi. 16. ^o Heb. iv. 26.
^p Heb. x. 22. ^q Gal. iv. 6. ^r Isa. xlv. 19.

intercession, for we were baptized into his name. We may plead the promise of the Spirit's assistance, God's acceptance, and an answer of peace: and may we not then come with boldness? In prayer we stand in need of the Father's smiles, the Son's righteousness, and the Spirit's aid; in reference to each of which, we should consider, that we were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Baptism is especially encouraging in reference to our joint addresses; our approaches to God in the solemn assemblies of his people. Our participation of the privileges of the communion of saints, should encourage us to abound in the duties of that communion. We belong to the praying body; and our spiritual communion with that body in prayers and praises, (even with those with whom we cannot maintain a local communion,) is very comfortable, when we approach the throne of grace. To think, that that mystical body, into which we were baptized, is attending the same throne of grace, upon the same errands. Let this therefore lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees. But further,

2. The consideration of our *baptism, as administered in infancy*, will much more befriended prayer; both as an inducement to, and an encouragement in, that duty. Three comfortable inferences may be drawn from it, viz.

(1.) That God is ready to receive those who come to him, and will in no wise cast them out.

He who would have little children come to him, *infants*, such as cannot speak for themselves, surely will not reject and put away those, who, though still very weak, yet do, in some measure, lisp out their desires to him. Infant baptism discovers the goodness of God to be, preventing goodness, unmerited goodness, free in the communication of itself, and not strict in standing upon terms. Hard thoughts of God drive us *from*, and discourage us *in*, the duty of prayer; and are no less uncomfortable to ourselves, than they are dishonourable to God. Now, the serious consideration of the favours of our infant baptism, would cause the goodness of God to pass before us; and very much endear our Master, and his service, to us. And this would bring us with cheerfulness, and boldness, to the throne of grace, to ask, and receive, mercy and help.

(2.) That we were early brought into covenant with him; were betimes received into the number, and entitled to the privileges of children; which is a great engagement upon us to adhere to God, and a great encouragement to us to hope, that God will not forsake us. It is a good plea in prayer, (see how comfortably David pleads it, Ps. xxii. 9—11.) *Thou art he that took me out of the womb*; (and imme-

diately into covenant;) *thou didst make me hope* (though incapable of the act of hope, didst lay a foundation for hope to build upon) *when I was upon my mother's breasts: thou art my God*, for *I was reared upon thee* (by my parents' dedication of me); *from the womb*; therefore, *be not far from me*. He pleads to the same purpose when old, (Ps. lxxi. 5. compare v. 17, 18.) for time doth not wear out the comfort of our infant covenants. How careful was God to get possession of us betimes! and can we find our hearts now to cast him off? or can we fear that he should cast us off?

(3.) That he was our fathers' God.

That we may with comfort take hold of, in the darkest seasons. Thus the saints of old used to do: though they might have said, *my God*, they chose rather to insist upon the covenant relation of their parents. David presseth this in his plea for salvation, (Ps. lxxxvi. 16.) *Save the son of thy handmaid*; born in thy house, therefore obliged to serve thee, and therefore expecting to be saved by thee. We find God often showing kindness, as David to Mephibosheth, for the father's sake; which, perhaps, is therefore called the *kindness of God*; such kindness as God was used to show, hereditary kindness. Plead then (as Asa with Benhadad) an ancient league between God and thy father; and take encouragement from thence.

Thus may we order our cause before God, and fill our mouths with arguments; not to move God, (for he is of one mind, and who can turn him?) but to move ourselves; to strengthen our faith, and to quicken our fervency.

6. We should improve our baptism, especially our infant baptism, as a powerful engagement to brotherly love.

This is the *new commandment*; though an old commandment, enforced by new motives, built upon a new foundation. It is peculiarly the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family; an essential branch of our holy and excellent religion. Now there is that in baptism, which should mightily induce us to love one another with a pure heart, fervently: and would (if used aright) eradicate all love-killing principles and practices; and overcome all our feuds and animosities; and readily and powerfully suggest, to all Christians, that necessary caution, *See that ye fall not out by the way*.

1. The consideration of our *baptism* would be a great inducement to brotherly love.

(1.) The oneness of our baptism. It is the apostle's argument for *unity of spirit*, that there is one *baptism*. As there is one faith, so there is one way of professing and owning that faith, viz. baptism: the common door of admission into the visible

• 1 Chron. xii. 17. 2 Chron. xx. 6.

• 2 Sam. ix. 7.

• Eph. iv. 3, 5.

urch. Those who, in lesser things, differ in their apprehensions, and are accordingly subdivided, yet this agree, that they are baptized into the same great names of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Whatever dividing names we are known by, whether of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, whether of Luther, or Calvin, or the Church of England, we are not baptized into those names; (the great apostle disowns it, 1 Cor. i. 13. *Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*) no, we were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, who hath instituted this ordinance, as a centre of unity to all Christians. The faith professed in baptism is a *common faith*;* (that in which all Christians are agreed; abstracted from all controverted opinions of lesser moment;) of which, what is commonly called the Apostle's Creed may be considered as a summary. Our Lord Jesus, in baptism, received us, not to *doubtful disputations*;[†] therefore we should so receive one another. All Christians who are duly baptized, however differing in other things, are interested in one and the same covenant, guided by one and the same rule, meet at one and the same throne of grace, are entitled to one and the same inheritance, and all this by one and the same baptism: and should they not then love one another, since the things wherein they agree are so many and so great, while the things wherein they differ are, comparatively, so few, at least, so small? How should this shame us out of our private piques and quarrels, distances and estrangements, that our Lord Jesus has not only put up a prayer, but instituted such an ordinance, *that we all might be one*?[‡] As for those who enervate the force of this argument, and evade it, by appropriating baptism (like the Donatists of old) to their own way, whatever the monopolizing, excluding principle be, on the one hand or on the other, let not my soul come into their secret, unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. To unchurch, unchristianize, unbaptize, all those who are not in every thing of our length, is a project so dishonourable to Christ, so destructive to the catholic church, and so directly opposite to the spirit of the gospel, that I cannot mention it without expressing my abhorrence of it. The Lord preserve his church from the mischievous consequences of pride and bigotry.

(2.) The operation of our baptism.

Though baptism doth not always produce a real change, yet it doth always effect a relative change: so that those who are duly baptized, are thereby admitted members of the visible church, and therefore stand in a near relation to all the members of it: for *by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.*[†] By baptism we are all admitted into the family and kingdom of Jesus Christ, and so become related to one another, yea,

are adopted to be the children of the same Father. All the saints, both in heaven and earth, make but one family, and that named *from Christ*,[‡] the head of it, to whom they are all united. *Have we not all one Father?*[§] from whence it follows, *that all we are brethren.*[¶] Now relation is a great inducement to love and affection: if we are brethren, we should love as brethren. No strife, *for we are brethren.*[‡] It would be very unnatural for the children of the same father to fall out, and fight, because they are not all of the same stature, strength, or complexion. Baptized Christians are *members one of another*:[¶] and it is very unbecoming, if there be not that love and sympathy among them, which there is between the members of the natural body. Though the members have not all the same place, strength, comeliness, and use in the body, yet they love one another, and have a concern one for another, because it is the same soul which actuates, and animates, and permeates, every member of the body; and should it not be so in the mystical body, forasmuch as we are *members in particular*, and have *need one of another*?[¶] For though there be a *diversity of operations, and gifts, and administrations*, yet there is but one *spirit*,[†] which actuates all the members. For this reason, the strong must not despise the weak, nor the weak judge the strong. This should enlarge and extend our love to all Christians, however distinguished, dignified, or vilified.

(3.) The obligation of our baptism.

It binds us to obey: and this is the second great commandment to which we are to yield obedience, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*: and this, revived and confirmed by our Saviour, so often repeated, so much inculcated, so strongly ratified, and enforced by so many pressing motives and arguments, that we have precept upon precept, line upon line, to this purpose. Now our baptism is a bond upon our souls, *to walk according to this rule*. That which doth so richly assure us of God's love to us, doth, no doubt, firmly engage us to love one another. Envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness, are some of those devilish lusts, which in our baptism we renounced, and engaged to fight against. Shall we then harbour and embrace them? or be led, and actuated, and governed by them? It is the apostle's argument, (Col. iii. 8—10.) *Put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, seeing you have (at least in profession and engagement) put off the old man, and put on the new man.*

2. The consideration of our baptism, *as administered in infancy*, would very much strengthen the inducement to brotherly love.

(1.) As it is a signal discovery of God's love to us; preventing love, unmerited love.

If he loved us when we were infants, and had

* Tit. i. 4. † Rom. xiv. 1. ‡ John xvii. 21.
 † 1 Cor. xii. 13. ‡ Eph. iii. 15. † Mal. ii. 10.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 8. † Gen. xiii. 8. † Eph. iv. 25.
 † 1 Cor. xii. 25—27. † 1 Cor. xii. 4—6.

nothing in us to induce or encourage love, what can we object against loving our brother? The beloved disciple; who had leaned on Jesus' breast, was most loving himself, and did most press love upon others. The more sensible we are of God's love to us, the more will our hearts be drawn out in love to our brethren. All acceptable love in us is but the reflex of God's love to us. Are you to seek for proofs of the love of God to you? as they, Mal. i. 2. *Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?* Reflect upon your infant baptism, and you will see wherein: that was a time of love indeed; the love of espousals; and should not we then love one another, with a pure heart, fervently.

(2.) As it puts us into an *early* relation one to another.

Those relations which take rise with our birth, and into which we are led by nature itself, have usually the greatest influence, and lay the strongest ties upon us. Such is this. We are brethren from our infancy; were born in the same house; and having the same birth-right privileges, being interested in the same happiness and hopes, let us not fall out by the way. Especially, considering what was our state when we were put into that relation: we were *little children*, and therefore, *in malice, should be such still.*^a Our infant baptism should teach us to *receive the kingdom of God as little children*;^b with all humility, and lowliness of mind; which is a temper that would mightily promote our brotherly love. The consideration of our infant baptism would help to make us like *little children*;^c peaceable and loving in all our carriage; plain and open, without design, or study of revenge.

Other particulars might be mentioned, wherein our baptism, our *infant baptism*, may be improved by us, to promote our comfort and holiness, and to build us up in our most holy faith; but these shall suffice.

CHAPTER VI.

DIRECTIONS TO PARENTS, CONCERNING THE BAPTISM OF THEIR CHILDREN.

NEXT to our own baptism, and the improvement of that, our concern is about our children's baptism; for they are parts of ourselves, and God and nature have constituted us feoffees, in trust for them, to act for their good, in their behalf. And I fear that much of the contempt which infant baptism is brought under with some, is owing to the ignorance, neglect, and mismanagement, which parents are guilty of in that matter; and nothing would be more effectual

to revive and preserve the honour of it, than parents conscientious and serious discharge of their duty with reference to it; for they are the persons concerned, and their carelessness is an error in the first concoction. And therefore, *I write unto you, fathers.* The relation of a father, by the consent of nature, as well as by the law of nature, hath authority and honour, belonging to it. There were several dignities, and privileges, conferred by the Roman government upon the father of three children. Children are a *heritage of the Lord*; happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. Those who are not quite divested of natural affection, value them accordingly. They are (saith Jacob) *the children that God hath graciously given thy servant.*^d When they are multiplied, they are not to be accounted burdens, but blessings: Obed-Edom had eight sons, *for the Lord blessed him.* Our duty is to take care of them; especially of their better part. One of the first things we have to do for them, is to dedicate them to God in baptism. And concerning that, we shall endeavour to direct you that are parents,

I. In your preparation for it.

II. In your management of it.

III. In your improvement of it afterwards, in reference to your children. For the

I. Preparation for it. I observe in general, that before this, as before other solemn ordinances, there ought to be due preparation; (as much as before the Lord's supper;) and yet ordinarily how little is there! The more seldom we have occasion to attend upon the Lord in this service, the more need we have to prepare for it with all seriousness. More particularly,

1. Get a right understanding of the ordinance, and of your own concern and interest in it.

There are many who bring their children to be baptized, only because it is the fashion of the country, and they would be strangely looked upon if they did not do it; but they know nothing of the meaning of this service. And if we thus offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? Give diligence therefore, clearly and distinctly to understand what you do, and why you do it.

1. What you do.

You give up your children (which are parts of yourselves) to God. It is a peculiar interest which parents have in their children; founded upon the highest law, and the greatest love: it is undisputed, natural, and unalienable. Know then, that by virtue of this interest, you have a power to dispose of them, for their good, and God's glory. You do therefore accordingly give them up to God; and transfer all your right and title to them, and all your interest in them, to him, according to the tenor of the covenant. You resign them to God, to be taught.

^a 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

^b Mark x. 15.

^c Matt. xviii. 3.

^d John ii. 13, 14.

^e Gen. xxxiii. 5.

is ruled, and disposed of, and portioned by him ; he made holy and happy by him. You bring them to be laid at the feet of the Lord Jesus. Understood farther,

1.) That you do hereby oblige your *children* ; and them to the Lord ; to his word and to his law. Inasmuch as in you lies, you lay an obligation upon them, *against* all sin, and *to* all duty. Not an original, but an additional, bond. You bind them to a great deal ; but to nothing to which they were not bound before. You do in baptism, as when you set our children apprentices ; interposing your own authority to oblige them to the duties of the relation, inasmuch as a sincere regard to their real advantage. And when you think this too much to do for God, who gave us a Son, his only-begotten Son, for you ? The Father *sanctified his Son, and sent him into the world ; he set him apart for the work of our redemption ; and should not we then sanctify our children, and set them apart for God and his glory ?* Which may afterwards operate, by a moral influence, as an argument with themselves (and all little enough) to fix them to God and duty.

(2.) You do hereby oblige *yourselves* to bring them up accordingly ; in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is a great charge, which parents take upon themselves, when they bring their children to be baptized ; and I fear the reason why so few perform it, is because they do so little understand and consider it. This obligation upon *you* also, is indeed no more than you were before bound to, though it both more bind you, and strengthen the natural obligation. Labour to understand this. In dealing with them, you would not put your hand to a bond, without knowing first what it meant, and what you took upon yourselves by it ; and will you, in dealing with God, do such a thing rashly and inconsiderately ?

2. Why you do it.

Understand upon what grounds you go, in bringing your children to baptism ; else it is not in faith. We have endeavoured, at large, to show what Scripture grounds we go upon in baptizing children : understand them well. In short, (1.) You do it in compliance with the tenor of the covenant ; which runs, *to us and to our children*, that God will be a *God to us and to our seed*. (2.) You do it, in conformity to the will of God revealed in the Old-Testament administration of the covenant ; in that which was not ceremonial, viz. the admission of the children of the covenanters into the same covenant with their parents. (3.) You do it in obedience to the appointment of Christ ; that *little children should be brought unto him*.^c (4.) You do it in pursuance of your own covenant with God ; wherein you gave up yourselves, and all near and dear to you, unto him ; your children therefore especially, who are in

a manner parts of yourselves. (5.) You do it out of a natural affection to your children ; which prompts you to do all you can for their good. Labour thus to understand yourselves, and act with reason in what you do.

2. Be serious in examining yourselves, and your own covenant interest in God.

What title your children have to the ordinance, they have *by descent* from you : and there appears no reason to expect, that the streams should rise higher than the spring ; that you should convey to your children a higher and greater title than you have yourselves. Therefore examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith ; for though your profession of faith (in nothing visibly contradicted) be sufficient, so far as the church can decide, to entitle your children to this ordinance, yet God is not to be mocked ; he searcheth the heart, and will not be put off with shows and pretences ; he knoweth where the heart is *not right, but unsteady in the covenant*. Therefore we should diligently commune with our own hearts in this matter, and take heed of deceiving ourselves. It is a thing in which multitudes are mistaken, and in which a mistake is extremely fatal. Therefore ask, *Is there not a lie in my right hand ?* When we bring our children to be *ingrafted into Christ*, we should inquire, Am I myself ingrafted into him ? Am I alive indeed, or have I only a *name to live ?* Take this opportunity of driving the matter to an issue. Such a shaking of the tree, if it be indeed well rooted, will but make it take root the stronger.

3. Renew your repentance for the breach of your baptismal engagements.

Upon every renewal of our covenant with God, we should penitently reflect upon our violations of it : especially when, in effect, renewing that baptism which is the baptism of repentance. Those whom John baptized confessed their sins ; and so should they who bring their children to be baptized. It is well the covenant we are under leaves room for repentance.

4. Be earnest with God in prayer, for a blessing upon his own ordinance.

The blessing of God is all in all to the comfort and benefit of it. Pray that the ordinance may be made effectual to the child, and not be an empty sign. How grace is wrought in the hearts of infants we know not : how should we, when the production of it in the adult is such a mystery ? like the wind, which we cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth : it is like the forming of the bones in the womb of her that is with child. But this we know, that the God of the spirits of all flesh hath access to the souls of little infants, and can make them meet for heaven : and from thence we should take encouragement in our prayers for them. God is not tied

to means, for he needs them not; but we may, with more confidence, expect his manifestations of himself when we are in the use of the means. Pray then that God would grace his own ordinance with his special presence, and accept the dedication of the child to him. This is a promised mercy, but yet for this God will be sought unto, and *inquired of by the house of Israel.*

What I say to one I say to both the parents. The mother must consent to the dedication of the child, as well as the father, though commonly it is the father who makes the profession; and they should both together discourse before of these things, as *heirs together of the grace of life.*^d They are generally both contriving about the outside, and the formality of the service; they would do well to help one another in the main matter. The dedication of Samuel^e was his mother's act and deed; and David often pleads a relation to God as the son of his handmaid. The mothers, from the conception, should look upon the fruit of their bodies as belonging to God; and, in intention, devote it accordingly. It may minister some comfort and relief to a pious mother, in breeding-sicknesses, and bearing-pains, that they are in order to bring another member into Christ's visible body; and who would not encounter some difficulties to bear a child to the Lord? It was the peculiar honour of Mary, that she was the mother of Christ: and is not some ray of that honour put upon those who are the mothers of Christians? Is it not a *holy thing which shall be born of thee*, and that shall be called a child of God? This, indeed, was said of Christ, (Luke i. 35.) but it may, in some sense, be said of Christians. Be not cast down then, or disquieted; *blessed shall be the fruit of thy body.*^f It is the Lord's, and God will look after his own. You should take care accordingly to preserve it, and to keep yourselves pure. Every Christian is a spiritual Nazarite; and if Samson must be a *Nazarite from the womb*, his mother must *eat no unclean things.*^g Do nothing to destroy, or defile, that temple of God which is in the rearing. Have an eye to this, in your provision for your children, as soon as they come into the world. When the knees prevent them, and the breasts which they suck, say, This care I take of them, that they may be given up to the Lord. Nurse them for him. This would sanctify natural affection, and make those common cares peculiarly pleasing to God, and first abounding to a good account. While you love your children, and take care of them, and provide for them, and nurse them, (which those that are able ought to do,) only because they are your own offspring, what do ye more than others? more than even the brute creatures? But to do this with an eye to God, to take care of them as born in his house, children of the covenant, who belong to

Christ's family; this is to do it *after a godly* way, and as *becomes the gospel.* Where special privileges are enjoyed, even in common actions, there ought to be a special regard to those privileges.

II. As to the management of the ordinance when it comes, I would direct you,

1. As to the externals of it.

Be prudent in ordering the circumstances (so far as they fall within your management) in such a manner, as that the great ends of the institution may be promoted, and not hindered. For time, and place, we gave directions before. In general, consult the solemnity of an ordinance, and let it be managed with an agreeable seriousness. We see too commonly, that inviting and treating the guests is made the main matter at a christening, as they call it. All the care is to please their neighbours while there is but little thought how to please God in it.

I condemn not the inviting of friends (Christian friends) on such an occasion, provided the ends be right: not to make a *fair show in the flesh*, but that our friends may be witnesses of our covenanting with God for our seed, and may join with us in prayer for a blessing upon the ordinance. When John was circumcised, Elizabeth had her neighbours and cousins with her, Luke i. 58, 59. And this may be meant to preserve, and increase, that love which there should be amongst neighbours and relatives, and to knit families together.

Nor do I altogether condemn such moderate expressions of rejoicing, as do become Christians, and are consistent with the seriousness of the institution. But how rarely are they so regulated! Abraham made a great feast, not when Isaac was circumcised, but when he was *weaned*, Gen. xxi. 8. How prejudicial such entertainments usually are, not only to the health of the mother, but to the efficacy of the ordinance, is too evident. Meetings of friends upon that occasion, should be to edify, not to insnare one another. And yet how often do we see one of the great institutions of the gospel managed much like the idolatrous worship of the golden calf, when, after a piece of blind devotion, *the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play*: thus gratifying that flesh which in baptism we renounce. Fashion is commonly pleaded as an excuse in this case: a poor excuse for a Christian. What is Christianity but a sober singularity? a non-conformity to this present world? We must inquire, what is right, not what is fashion; what is the way of Christ, not what is the way of the world.

Particular rules cannot here be given with any certainty, so as to fit all persons, places, and circumstances; only, in general, let not the *shadow* eat out the substance, nor the beauty of the ordi-

^d 1 Pet. iv. 7.

^e 1 Sam. i. 11.

^f Deut. xxviii. 4.

^g Judg. xiii. 7.

nce be eclipsed by the pomp and gaiety of the
ist.

2. As to the frame of your spirits, (which is the
in matter, and what God especially looks at,) take
ese directions:

1. Do what you do, uprightly, and sincerely.

That good man was much in the right, who pro-
sed, *that he knew no religion but sincerity*. It is the
ine condition of the new covenant; and our great
ivilege, and that wherein the covenant of grace is
:ll ordered, that sincerity is our gospel perfection,
en. xvii. 1.) *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*:
e. upright in the main matter of covenanting with
od; sincere in the closing, consenting act, how-
er, in many things, thou mayst come short.

(1.) Be upright in dedicating yourselves to God.
ean what you say, when you say you will be the
ord's. It is the comfort of all those who are
raelites indeed, that they are able to say, through
race, that though they have many ways dealt *fool-
hly* in the covenant, yet they *have not dealt falsely
the covenant*.[†] Take heed of that. Allowed guile
our federal transactions is the radical hypocrisy.
e not deceived, God is not mocked. We may
ossibly deceive one another, but God is too wise
o be imposed upon. If we think to put a cheat
pon him, we shall prove in the end to have put the
orst cheat upon our own souls. Dread the thought
f lying to the God of truth; as they did, (Ps. lxxviii.
8, 37.) who only *flattered him with their tongues, for
heir heart was not right with him*. Let there be no
eserve for any known sin; no exception of any
ouse of Rimmon: such a proviso would be the
verthrow and defeasance of the deed.

(2.) Be upright in the dedication of your children
o God.

You say they shall be the Lord's; but are you in
good earnest? and do you mean as you say? Do
you really intend your children to be taught, and
ruled, and disposed of, and provided for, by the
Lord Jesus? and this, with a single eye to the will
of God as your rule, and the glory of God as your
end?

You should examine your own souls, whether you
are thus cordial and sincere, or not. He that is not
sincere in covenanting for himself, can never be
right hearty in covenanting for his children. And
who knows what a wrong your hypocrisy may prove
to your poor infants?

2. Do it in faith; especially faith in the great
Mediator.

When Hannah came to dedicate her son Samuel
to God, she brought a sacrifice, 1 Sam. i. 24, 25.
Christ is the great sacrifice, in the virtue and value
of which we must present ourselves and ours to
God.

3. Do it thankfully.

It is our duty, in every thing, to give thanks;
especially in such a thing as this, which is so very
much to our comfort and advantage.

(1.) Bless God for your covenant interest; that
God is, and will be, to you a God: and take this
occasion to speak of it to his praise. Wonder at his
condescending goodness. Whence is this to me, a
worthless worm of the earth? So mean, so vile, and
yet taken into covenant with God! interested in the
Lord of glory; his attributes, his promises! *Who
am I, O Lord God?*[‡] That God should take any
notice of me, should show me any token for good, is
wonderful, considering how undeserving, how ill-
deserving, I am; but that he should communicate his
favours in a covenant way, interpose himself for secu-
rity, make himself a debtor to his own truth, is such a
paradox of love, as challengeth everlasting wonder
and praise. That I should be made a friend and fa-
vourite, while so many continue *aliens and strangers
to the covenant of promise! be astonished, O heavens,
at this! Lord, how is it, that thou wilt manifest thyself
to us, and not unto the world?*[‡] A heart to be duly
thankful to God for the covenant of grace, is a good
evidence of our interest in it. Upon this occasion,
take a view of covenant privileges: observe how
well ordered and how sure the covenant is; what
you have in hope, and what you have in hand, by
virtue of it; and let all this draw out your hearts in
love and thankfulness. Trace up the streams of all
your mercies to the inexhaustible spring; and let
this be the burthen of every song of praise, *to per-
form the mercy promised, and to remember his holy
covenant*.[‡]

(2.) Bless God that the covenant of grace is so
ordered, that not you only, but your offspring, are
taken into that covenant: that God will be a God,
not to you only, but to your seed,[†] and so entail his
kindness, by a covenant commanded to a thousand
generations. Thus richly doth free grace outdo all
expectation. *I had not thought to see thy face,* (saith
dying Jacob to his son Joseph,) *and lo, God hath
showed me also thy seed*.[‡] That God should signify
his good will to us, is very wonderful; but lo, as if
*this had been a small matter, he hath spoken concerning
his servants' house, for a great while to come; and is
this the manner of men, O Lord God?*[‡] Admire the
condescension of divine grace herein. Many great
men think it beneath them to take notice of children;
but our Lord Jesus will have little children brought
to him, and by no means forbidden. Mention this
to the glory of God's wisdom and goodness, and
never forget this instance of his loving-kindness.

(3.) Bless God that you have a child to dedicate
to him.

Much of the mercy of having children lies in

† Pa. xlv. 17. ‡ 2 Sam. vii. 18. § John xlv. 22. ¶ Luke ii. 72.

† Gen. xvii. 7. ‡ Gen. xlviii. 11. § 2 Sam. vii. 19.

this, that we have them to devote to God: not only a seed to be accounted to us, but to be accounted to the Lord, for a generation:⁷ not only to honour us, and to bear up our names, but to honour God, and to bear up his name in the world. What is an estate, or office, good for, but to glorify God with it, and that we may have something to lay out, and use, for his honour? Bless God, that he hath not only given you a child, but that he hath invited and encouraged you to give it to him again, and is pleased to accept of it. Be thankful that you have a child admitted, from its birth, into the bosom of the church, and under the wings of the Divine Majesty. How sad were it to bring forth children to the murderer!^a but how comfortable to bring forth children to the Saviour! Hannah had been long barren, and it was her great grief; at length God gave her a Samuel; but it doth not appear that his birth was so much the matter of her praise, as his dedication to the Lord. When she had brought him, in his infancy, to the tabernacle, then it was that she said, *My soul rejoiceth in the Lord.*^a You have more reason to be thankful that you have a child born to inherit the privileges of the covenant, than if you had a child born to inherit the largest estate.

(4.) Bless God that you have opportunity, and a heart, thus to dedicate your child to God.

That he hath given you to see, and claim, and use your privilege; and hath appointed his ministers, by baptism, solemnly to invest the children you dedicate to God, in the benefits of the covenant. Bless God that he hath erected his tabernacle, and sanctuary, in the midst of us; and hath not left himself without witness, nor us without the means of grace and salvation. He hath not dealt so with many other nations; (they and theirs are afar off;) and should not this make us very thankful? Preventing mercies, distinguishing mercies, spiritual mercies, are in a special manner obliging. Rightly understand the nature and intention of the ordinance, and you will say, with wonder and praise, *This is no other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven: this gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter:* enter into it therefore with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.

4. Do it sorrowing for the corruption of nature, which needs cleansing.

The appointment of infant baptism is an evidence of original sin: if little children were not polluted, they would not need to be washed; and consider, that they derive their pollution from you. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?*^b *They were shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin.*^c It is so even with the children of pious parents; the natural corruption, not the supernatural grace, is propagated. Methinks this should be a melancholy thought to

parents, that while they cannot communicate their graces to their offspring, they cannot but communicate their corruptions. Adam was himself made in the image of God; but when he was fallen, *he begat a son in his own likeness.*^d And the same corrupt likeness is still conveyed. Little children, therefore, need this sacramental regeneration: upon occasion of which you, who are parents, should humbly reflect upon your own corruption, which kindled theirs. It should be matter of grief to you, that your children bear your iniquity; and may blame you for the conveyance of that root of bitterness, which bears so much sin and misery.

5. Do it, rejoicing in the covenant of grace, which provides cleansing.

Thus, at the laying of a stone in the gospel temple, as at the laying of the first stone of Zerubabel's temple, there is occasion for a mixture of joy and sorrow: and that sorrow for sin is so far from obstructing, that really it befriends, this joy. Your children are polluted, but bless God that there is a fountain opened; not only for the house of David, but for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.^e Draw water therefore with joy out of these wells of salvation. Rejoice that there is such a covenant, which you can through grace lay any claim to. The expressions of joy, and rejoicing, at the baptism of a child, should be turned into this channel; and should terminate in God, and in the new covenant.

Thus should you bring your children to baptism. And in order thereunto, it is requisite, in general, that you be very serious in it. It certainly is not a thing to be done rashly, and carelessly, but with great concern; and the more it lies out of the way of our usual meditations in other duties, the more need we have to engage all that is within us in this service. I come now,

III. To direct you what improvement to make of infant baptism, with reference to your children.

If you have not put off humanity, as well as Christianity, and divested yourselves of natural, as well as gracious, affections, you cannot but have a great concern for your children. I desire to adore the wisdom of God, in planting in the hearts of parents such love to their offspring. It is necessary to the preservation, both of the church, and of the world; and is therefore to be encouraged. It is the work of grace to improve, direct, and sanctify, natural affections. Christian parents, therefore, should do more and better than others, in their carriage towards their children.

I undertake not to direct, in general, to all the duties which parents owe to their children; but to instruct them how to improve the baptism of their children; in praying for them; in teaching them; in providing for them; and in parting with them: in

⁷ Ps. xxii. 30. ^a Hos. iv. 13. ^a 1 Sam. i. 28. and ii. 1.

^b Job xiv. 4. ^c Ps. li. 8. ^d Gen. v. 3. ^e Zech. xiii. 1.

all which we should make use of their baptism, for direction, quickening, and encouragement.

Parents should improve the baptism of their children,

1. In praying for them.

It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to bless them in the name of the Lord. Children's asking their parents' blessing, for aught I see, is a very laudable practice, provided it do not degenerate (as the best duties too often do) into formality. It is good to teach children betimes how to value their interest in the prayers of their pious parents. In praying for children, it is proper sometimes to be particular, as Job for his, (*ch. i. 5.*) *according to the number of them all.*

As to the improvement of their baptism in praying for them,

(1.) Take direction from their baptism, what to beg of God for them; viz. covenant mercies.

God's promises are to be the rule of our prayers: we should seek from God, what God hath sealed to us. Remember, when you are praying for your children, to mind their spiritual and eternal state, more than their temporal. They were covenant blessings, which Abraham's heart was so much upon, when he prayed, (*Gen. xvii. 18.*) *O that Ishmael might live before thee;* though God heard him for Isaac. Seek not great things in the world for your children; but be earnest with God to give them knowledge and grace; that good part; the best portion you can desire for them. Help them by your prayers, against their lusts and corruptions. You were accessory to their spiritual distempers, and therefore you should do what you can to get them cured; and what can you do better, than bring them to Christ, the great Physician, in the arms of faith and prayer? as that poor woman, (*Matt. xv. 22.*) whose daughter was vexed with a devil.

(2.) Take encouragement from their baptism in your prayers for them.

Look upon their baptism, and you will see upon what grounds you go in praying for them. You pray for them as in covenant with God, interested in the promises, sealed to be the Lord's; and those are good pleas in prayer, to be used for the confirmation of your faith. Pray that God would treat them as his; tell him, and humbly insist upon it, that they are his; whom you gave to him, and of whom he accepted: and will he not take care of his own? How far the promise of the new heart is sealed in baptism, I do not now inquire; but the sealing of the covenant is in general, as a token of God's good will to our seed, as a sufficient handle for faith to take hold on, in praying for our children. I see not how those parents can, with equal confidence, pray for their children, who deny them to be in covenant,

and so set them upon even ground with the children of infidels. Isaac and Jacob blessed their children *by faith*, (*Heb. xi. 20, 21.*) and that faith respected the covenant which God had made with them, and with their seed.

In praying for children, it is our duty to resign and give them up to God, to be disposed of as he pleaseth; with a holy resolution quietly to acquiesce in those disposals. Now it is very comfortable thus to give them up in prayer, when we have already given them up in baptism. Having submitted them to such an ordinance, we may, with comfort, submit them to any providence which God shall order for them. With great comfort may you give them up, to one who hath already received them, and set his own stamp and superscription upon them. It was said of Austin, who was so often prayed for by his pious mother Monica, that surely a child of so many prayers could not miscarry. If you be most earnest for spiritual blessings for your children, God will give an answer of peace, some way or other, some time or other. In all your blessings of them, (as in the blessing of Jacob,) let the *dew of heaven*^a be put before the *fatness of earth*; and let the blessings of the *nether springs* be still postponed to those of the *upper*.

2. Parents should improve the baptism of their children in teaching them.

I take it for granted, that it is the duty of parents to teach their children. The very light of nature dictates this: and many heathens have left, not only good rules to this purpose, but good examples. But it is more clearly enjoined by the Scripture law. And there, the duty of parents is summed up in this, (*Eph. vi. 4.*) *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Take heed of the devil's nurture, rest not in the world's nurture, but let it be the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It was an Old-Testament precept, (*Prov. xii. 6.*) *Train up a child in the way he should go;* and this is equally a duty under the New Testament; and it may still be hoped that he will not afterwards *depart from it*; but that the well-seasoned vessel will retain the savour of life unto life. The first dispensation of the covenant, to the covenanters and their seed, that we have upon record, was to one who was famous for the religious education of children. *I know Abraham,* (saith God,) *that he will command his children and his household after him.*^f And this was enjoined to the Jews, (*Deut. vi. 7.*) *Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children.*

It is very disengenuous, and a perfect mockery, to dedicate your children to God, and then to breed them up for the flesh and for the world, and for the devil. See *Ezek. xvi. 20.*

Now, in reference to this, parents may two ways improve their baptism:

^a Gen. xxvii. 28.

^f Gen. xviii. 19.

(1.) As an argument with themselves to give them instruction.

Though this is so great and necessary a duty, yet how sadly is it neglected! Many, who are called Christians, are more solicitous to have their dogs taught, and their horses managed, than they are to have their children educated to the greatest advantage. Remember your dedication of them to God in baptism, as a motive to the utmost diligence in their education. Besides the tie of nature to do them all the good you can, especially to their better part, besides the command of God, which obligeth you to it, you have bound yourselves, by a solemn promise, in the presence of God. It was upon these terms that they were baptized; not only your profession of Christianity, but your promise to bring them up in that holy religion; and you break that promise if you neglect to do so. Your children are put out to you to be brought up for God. When God graciously gives a child to believing parents, he doth, in effect, say to them, as Pharaoh's daughter said to the mother of Moses, *Take this child, and nurse him for me;*^g and if it be, indeed, done for God, *he will give thee thy wages.* Christian families are the church's nurseries, where the young plants are reared; and parents have, in a special manner, the charge of them; and must be called to account concerning that charge. But what a sad account will many parents have to give of this stewardship another day! who have not merely buried, but wasted this talent: who have not only neglected to improve their authority, and influence, for the good of their children's souls, but have abused both, to their unspeakable prejudice.

Besides the *promise* you break, and the *trust* you falsify, by your neglect of your children's education, consider likewise the *intention* you frustrate. You do, as much as in you lies, defeat the design of your children's baptism. It was to entitle them to church privileges: and to what purpose is that, if you do not teach them what use to make of those privileges? For want of educating your children aright, then, you receive the grace of God, manifested in their baptism, in vain.

Use their baptism as an argument with yourselves,
[1.] To begin teaching them betimes.

Children are capable of religious impressions sooner than we are commonly aware of; and it is good to season the vessel well at first. Even then, when the understanding is too weak fully to receive, and the memory to retain, truths and notions, the mind, by a prudent, pleasing management, may be formed to that which is good. Endeavour, by a reverend carriage in your religious exercises, and your sober deportment on the Lord's day, to possess them with an early apprehension that the worship of

God is a serious thing. I think it is good to bring children betimes to the solemn assembly, where there is convenience for it; as soon as they are capable of being kept so quiet as not to give disturbance to others, (and with a little care and prudence they will quickly be brought to that,) though they are not able to understand what is said and done. My reasons are, that children may hereby be trained up to an observance of religion, and be ready to receive impressions as soon as ever they become capable. And there have been strange instances of the early notice which children have taken of good things. Besides, that the parents do hereby glorify God. And the Hosannas of even little children are not to be considered as a taking of the name of God in vain. Our Lord expressed his approbation of them.

The early dedication of our children to God, should excite us to an early care of them. If God's free grace was manifested to them, in such a preventing way, what an inducement should this be to us, to begin with them as soon as ever they are capable! They are therefore taken into the church so young, that (as we say) they may suck in religion with their milk, and, like Timothy, may (*απο βρεφους*) from their very infancy become acquainted with the *Holy Scriptures*.^h

[2.] To take pains with them in teaching them.

This is absolutely necessary. *Thou shalt teach them diligently,*ⁱ (Heb.) whet it upon them. In whetting, you turn the thing whetted on this side, and on that side, and often repeat the strokes. So, in teaching of children, the mind is affected (*non vi, sed saepe cadendo*) not by the violence, but by the frequency, of the impression. The minds of children, like narrow-necked bottles, must be filled but slowly, drop by drop. The young must be driven with patience, as they can go, to allude to Gen. xxxiii. 14. Special care must be taken to make things plain to them; condescending to their capacities, and lisping to them in their own language; conveying instruction by things sensible, or otherwise affecting; and making it, as much as may be, not a task, or burthen, but easy and pleasant. Children are half taught when they are reconciled to instruction.

There is one thing, which parents should especially be induced to, by the baptism of their children, and that is, to introduce them early into adult communion; bringing them to own the covenant of their baptism, and to take it upon themselves, by an approved profession of personal faith and repentance, in order to their regular admission to the ordinance of the Lord's supper. The profession of the parents was accepted, when they were infants; but being grown up, they must be called upon to make it their

^g Exod. ii. 9.

^h 1 Tim. iii. 15.

ⁱ Deut. vi. 7.

own act and deed. Hereby parents transfer much of their charge to the children themselves; who, becoming capable of acting for themselves, need not be in ward. God hath promised to pour out his *Spirit upon our seed*, and his *blessing upon our offspring*; and it follows, *they shall spring as willows by the water courses*; and one shall say, *I am the Lord's*, and another shall call himself by the name of *Jacob*, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the *Lord*, and shall surname himself by the name of *Israel*.¹ The blessing promised to our infant seed, is in order to hasten them personally to own their relation to God. Many parents, who would think themselves undone if they should not have their children baptized, take no care to bring them to the Lord's supper; as if that were not as necessary a recognition of their adult church membership, as baptism of their infant church membership.

Not that I would have children brought blindfold to confirmation, or the Lord's supper; nor brought by force; no, it must be a reasonable service; (*thy people shall be willing*;) but I think that children, when they grow up to a competent understanding, should be first instructed concerning adult communion; the terms of it, the privileges of it, the duty of it, the desirableness of it; should be taught the nature and design of the Lord's supper, and of that covenant of which it is the seal; and then should be persuaded to it, and stirred up to desire it. If they are careless, and unmindful of their souls and eternity, they should be alarmed, and excited to look about them, and concern themselves about so great a salvation. If timorous, and fearful, (which is a much better extreme,) they should be encouraged and comforted. Parents commonly pretend, as an excuse, that they do not see their children fit for the Lord's supper, or desirous of it, when they do not take pains to make them fit, and to stir up their desires. I know that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong: we can but do our duty, and leave the success to the free grace of God; who will be sanctified in all that draw nigh unto him.

(2.) It is to be used, as an argument with the children, to receive the instructions that are given them.

This will be of use, to open the ear to instruction, and to dispose the heart for learning. You may by this, take hold of them, and reason the case with them. Tell them what God promised to them, and what you promised for them; the one to *encourage*, and the other to *engage* them, to that which is good. When you are reproofing them for sin, and warning them against it, argue from their baptism. Tell them how contradictory lying, and sabbath-breaking, and swearing, and taking God's name in vain, &c. are to their profession, and promise, in that ordinance. The sons of nobles are often reminded,

that they must do nothing unbecoming their blood, nothing that would reflect upon their families; and should not the sons of Christians be, in like manner, exhorted not to disparage their Christianity. Remind them of their baptismal dedication and separation, when you are cautioning them to save themselves from an untoward generation; especially in the great turns of life.

3. Improve your children's baptism, in providing for them.

The light of nature, as well as Scripture precepts, make it your duty to supply them with things needful for them, as God gives you ability. If any man do otherwise, *he is worse than an infidel*;² no better than the unnatural *ostrich*, that *leaveth its eggs in the earth*.³ Though our main care must be, to instruct them, our next must be, to make provision for their comfortable subsistence. And,

(1.) We may, from their baptism, take direction in providing for them.

Baptism was to them the seal of the covenant of grace. The provision God made for them, in that covenant, was of spiritual blessings in heavenly things: be chiefly solicitous about those things. But that care is not to exclude, but to govern and overrule, your other cares. You must provide callings and employments for them: be directed herein by their baptism; and make that provision which will be most likely to answer and secure the ends of their baptism. As far as you can determine, choose those callings for them, which are best for their souls; most free from temptations, and best subservient to the general calling; in which (according to their place and capacity) they may most glorify God, and be most serviceable to their generation. If there be a due fitness for the work of the Christian ministry, the consideration of their baptism may be a particular inducement to devote them to that.

In providing estates and portions for them, seek not great things, but good things. Account that to be best for them which will be best in the end, and provide accordingly; food convenient, bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that they may come at last to their Father's house in peace; and then God will provide.

Parents also should from hence take a caution, to provide for their children by lawful and honest means. There is no need of our sin to bring to the birth God's promises. Those parents do not understand, or do not consider, the baptism of their children, who destroy their own souls to make their children rich. Those who depend upon provision by the covenant, need not take any indirect courses to make that provision. If God be the God of Abraham, and hath promised to make him great, Abra-

¹ Isa. xlv 3-5

² 1 Tim. v. 8.

³ Job xxxix. 14, 15.

ham will not reflect upon that covenant, by taking any thing of the king of Sodom, *lest he should say, I have made Abraham rich.*^a Distrust of God, and of his promise, draws many into crooked paths, and puts them upon base and sinful measures, to enrich their children. You went to God for the promise, do not go to the devil for the performance; nor inquire of Baalzebub, the God of Ekron, while there is a God in Israel, who hath said, that he will be a *God to you, and to your seed.*

(2.) We may take encouragement from their baptism, in providing for them.

What can be more encouraging, in this respect, than that God hath engaged to provide for them? *The seed of the upright shall be blessed,*^o even with temporal blessings, as far as is for God's glory, and their good. Have an eye to that promise, and plead it with God. Will he not provide for his own, especially those of his own house? If God be to them a God, they have enough. You are in care to lodge what you have for them in good hands; I know not how you can do better, than to lodge it by faith, and prayer, in the hands of God.

4. Improve your children's baptism, in reference to your parting with them.

We live in a parting world, and must provide accordingly. Those who are knit closest together, by love and nature, must expect to be separated. Parents and children are often parting,

(1.) In the world.

Parents are parting with their children from under their eye, and from under their wing. Sending them abroad for education, or into callings, or in marriage. Concerns which commonly lie much upon the hearts of parents: but so it must be: the young tree must not grow always in the nursery; but at length be transplanted into its proper place in the orchard. And when it comes to that, remember their baptism; and trust them in the arms of covenant love. If they are God's children, wherever they go they are not off their Father's ground, nor out of their Father's house. Though they seem the less *yours* when they are gone from you, yet they are not less *the Lord's*; which may be no less a comfort to you, than a caution to them. Are they the Lord's? Then send them no whither, but whither you can in faith desire God to go with them. When they go from under your eye, they do not go from under God's eye; neither the eye of his providence nor the eye of his observance. When you send them from you, remind them of their baptismal engagements, both to caution and to quicken them. Dismiss them with a covenant blessing; as Isaac sent away Jacob, (Gen. xxviii. 3, 4.) *God Almighty bless thee, and give thee the blessing of Abraham.* Tell them, and tell yourselves, that *the Lord watcheth be-*

tween you and them, when you are absent the one from the other.^p

Parents and children are parting,

(2.) Out of the world.

The most solemn partings are those which death makes. Death parts those whom nothing else would part; and, particularly, parents and children. You have need to prepare for such parting providences.

You that are parents may take comfort from your children's baptism,

1. When your children are, by death, taken from you.

A common case. Death observes not the laws of seniority; but often takes the children before the parents. In such a case, think of their baptism,

(1.) To induce you cheerfully to resign, and give them up, to God.

When you brought them to be baptized, you devoted them to God; transferred your own interest in them to him; you told him that they should be his, to all intents and purposes; and may he not then do what he will with his own? It is a quieting consideration, (I know those who have found it so,) that they are the Lord's, by your own consent. He not only gave them to you, but (which is for ever an estoppel to all complaints) you gave them to him again. Make it appear that you did it in sincerity, by your silent submission to the will of God, in removing them from you. Do not say, as David, *Would God I had died for thee;*^q but as Job, when he had buried all his children together in the ruins of their elder brother's house, *Blessed be the name of the Lord.*^r Sense will suggest a great deal, at such a time, that is aggravating: it was a pretty child, very forward and engaging; it may be, an only child, a first-born; but let this answer all, that God doth but take his own. When your children were to be dedicated to God in baptism, forasmuch as they could not do it themselves, you acted as the trustees of their wills; do so when they come to die. As, if you were to die yourselves, you would commit yourselves into the hands of God; so, when your children are dying, who cannot do it for themselves, it lies upon you to do it for them. Say, Father, into thy hands I commend my child's spirit. In baptism you resigned them to be members of the church militant, and surely now you cannot, you will not, gainsay their removal to the church triumphant. It looks like a very contented word of good old Jacob, (Gen. xliii. 14.) *If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.* He doth not say, I am undone, I shall never see a good day again; but, I am bereaved, and the will of the Lord be done.

(2.) To encourage you concerning their eternal happiness.

What ground of hope there is concerning the sal-

^a Gen. xiv. 23.

^o Ps. cxlii. 2.

^p Gen. xxxi. 39.

^q 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

^r Job i. 21.

ation of children of believing parents, who die in infancy, was showed before; take comfort from it such occasions. They were within the pale of church; within the verge of the covenant; within reach of that promise, *I will be a God to thee, to thy seed.* I ground not the hope of their salvation, merely, upon the external administration of ordinance, as if there were no hope concerning those who die unbaptized; but I ground it upon the covenant right to the ordinance. David's child died on the seventh day; it is supposed the eighth day from its birth, and therefore uncircumcised, and yet David comforts himself with the hope of its salvation, *I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*^a This must needs be very comfortable under such providences. They are taken out of our arms, but are removed to the embraces of a better father. Say not you have lost your child, I have but sent it before you. And it must needs be pleasing to think, that you have a part of yourselves in glory. Who are we, that we should help to depopulate the New Jerusalem? Though your children are early removed from this world, surely there is harm done, for the time they have lost on earth they have gained in heaven. If therefore it be asked, *it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?* say, as the Shunammite woman in a like case, *It is well.*^b

1. When you are taken from them; and perhaps you are young, and little, and shiftless, undisciplined, unprovided for. This is no uncommon case, and a very melancholy consideration to many young fathers; who is by this, more perhaps than any thing else, made unwilling to die. But let this once all disquieting cares and fears concerning them, that they are by baptism taken into covenant with God; a God with whom the *fatherless findeth mercy.*^c God hath expressed a special concern for the fatherless, (Ps. lxxviii. 4, 5.) He who *rides upon the heavens by his name Jah,* is, and will be, a *Father to the fatherless.* He hath taken up, when father and mother have forsaken.^d This God is your God, and God of your seed; and hath encouraged you to *love them with him; promising to preserve them for you.*^e Though you leave many, they are not too many for God to take care of. Though you have little to leave them, (Jehovah-jireh,) let the Lord provide; there is wealth enough in the promise. Though you have few or no friends to leave them to, God can raise up friends for them. He who can, out of stones, raise up children to Abraham, can and will, out of stones, raise up guardians for those children, rather than they should be deserted. You have never seen the seed of the righteous, *begging bread, forsaken.*^f Give them your parting blessing faith; the angel that has delivered you from all

evil, will *bless the lads;* forasmuch as his name is named upon them. They were some of David's last words, and may be a great support and cordial to dying believers; *Although my house be not so with God, (not so as I could wish it,) yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant.*^g

CHAPTER VII.

DIRECTIONS TO THOSE WHO ARE PRESENT WHEN THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM IS ADMINISTERED.

HERE I take it for granted, that it is most agreeable to the nature and design of the ordinance, that it be administered publicly; not huddled up in a corner, but owned in the face of the congregation, (if it may be,) the full congregation, that usually meets for other religious exercises; *in the presence of all his people.*^a However, I think it requisite that, except in cases of necessity, there should be a competent number present, (such a number as may be called a congregation,) that the child may have the benefit of the more prayers, and that others may be benefited by the administration. And therefore, in the close, I would give some directions to the congregation.

1. Do not turn your backs upon the administration of this ordinance; but be present at it. Think not yourselves unconcerned in it. Though the sacrament be administered only to the child; yet the word and prayer, which accompany the sacrament, you are all interested in, and may reap benefit by, if you have but a *heart to it.* It is a great contempt of the ordinance, and argues a very low esteem of a divine institution, needlessly to absent ourselves. It is a very ill thing to think meanly of any divine appointment. He said very well, who acknowledged, that the greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ. Besides that it is a contempt of the congregation; (as if we thought ourselves too good to bear them company;) and *despising the church of God,*^b is an affront to God himself.

2. Carry yourselves with reverence and seriousness during the administration.

It is a very solemn ordinance, and should be attended upon in a solemn manner. That inward awe, which should possess us in divine worship, must put a gravity upon the outward deportment. Whispering, and laughing, and other irreverences of behaviour, at this ordinance, are a provocation to God, an affront to the institution, a disturbance to others, and a bad sign of a vain and carnal mind. And yet how common! Surely in this, as in other duties, God is to be *worshipped with reverence, and godly fear; for he is greatly to be feared, in the assemblies*

^a 2 Sam. xii. 23. ^b 2 Kings iv. 26. ^c Hos. xiv. 3.
^d Ps. xxvii. 10. ^e Jer. xlix. 10.

^f Ps. xxxvii. 25.
^g Ps. cxvi. 18.

^h 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.
ⁱ 1 Cor. xi. 22.

of his saints. We have need, at this ordinance, to double our guard against such indecencies, because, sometimes, some little accident may happen, in the external administration, which may give occasion to a light and frothy spirit to express itself in such a carriage. But if we remember in whose presence we are, and what is doing, it will be a curb upon us, and keep us serious.

3. Apply your minds seriously to observe, and consider, that which is the substance, meaning, and end of the ordinance.

We are very apt, in positive institutions, (*herere in cortice,*) to look no further than the shell, or outside, without penetrating into the substance of the ordinance, or considering what is the *meaning of the service*. The external signs which should direct us to, many times direct us *from*, the consideration of the things signified. Therefore lay a charge upon your souls, to consider diligently what is before you. Let not the circumstances of the ordinance, (as the manner of washing, or the naming of a child,) draw away your thoughts from the substance. Consider it as a seal of the covenant of grace, and be mindful of that covenant. Your thoughts have a wide field to range in, where (if so disposed) you might furnish them with sweet and profitable matter to work upon.

4. Make application of that matter to yourselves.

Let your thoughts work upon your affections. The case of the baptized infant is a common case: it was once your own, and therefore the business in hand still concerns you. As we should be affected at the burial of our neighbours, because their situation *will be*, so we should, at the baptism of our neighbours, because *it hath been*, our own. In *this*, therefore, as well as in *that*, we should *lay it to heart*. Dionysius Alexandrinus speaks of one of his congregation, who was mightily affected with the questions put to the baptized, and their answers, so that, throwing himself at the minister's feet, he sadly bewailed himself, with many tears, Euseb. Eccles. Hist. l. vii. c. 9.

(1.) Take this occasion to reflect upon the original corruption of your nature, which needed cleansing.

We have need to be often reminded of this, [1.] That we may be daily mourning over it. To an enlightened conscience, it is an aggravation of sin, rather than an extenuation, that it is in our nature. Considering this, as an habitual aversion to the chief good, and an habitual proneness to the greatest evil, the thoughts of it should melt and break our hearts, and keep up an habitual repentance, and self-abhorrence, all our days. [2.] That we may be daily mortifying it, and keeping it under. Every remembrance of natural corruption should excite our watchfulness and diligence to destroy this root

of bitterness. Lay the axe therefore to it: keep a guard against the first motions of sin: get the vicious habit weakened. A sense of the difficulty there is in dealing with such enemies, should not be used as an excuse for our negligence, but rather as a spur to our diligence. Maintain the conflict, and, through the grace of Jesus Christ, the victory will be sure at last. *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

(2.) Take this occasion to acknowledge the mercy of your own infant baptism.

In our thanksgivings to God for his mercies, it is very good to begin early. If God remembers, I am sure we have no reason to forget, the *kindness of our youth*. Not that we loved him, but that he loved us. We should by no means forget his ancient favours: (*when Israel was a child, then I loved him.*^c) we should be often thinking of God's goodness to us when we were children; especially his spiritual favours, relating to our better part. What is said of God's early kindness to an infant state, (Ezek. xvi. 3, &c.) is very applicable to our infant souls: when we lay exposed and polluted, *he said unto us live, he spread his shirt over us, and swore unto us, and entered into covenant with us, and we became his: then he washed us with water, and anointed us with oil, and clothed us with brodered work, and decked us with ornaments:* and was not the time a time of love? to be often mentioned to the glory of free, preventing grace? Was it he who *held us up from the womb, and took us* (took us into covenant) *from our mother's bowels?* surely then, *our praise should be continually of him.*^d

[1.] Bless God for the honour of your infant baptism; that you were added to, the visible body of Christ when you were young. To be ranked among the seed of saints, is surely more truly great, and honourable, than to be enrolled in the race of nobles. Ishmael shall beget twelve princes, that is but a small favour, *my covenant will I establish with Isaac.*^e Surely herein the covenant of grace, in the external administration of it, was well ordered, and much in our favour, that the lambs are not turned out of the fold. Mention it therefore to the glory of God. Is it not an honour to be admitted into the school, the corporation, the family, of which Christ is the head? Hail! thou that art highly favoured. It is an honour not to be proud of, for we never merited it, but to be thankful for, and lived up to. [2.] Bless God for the opportunity of your baptism. That you were thereby put, as Zaccheus, into Christ's way; laid at the gate of the temple, ready to receive an alms, and a cure; placed by the pool-side, ready to step in upon the stirring of the waters. If you have not improved this opportunity, it is your own fault; you cannot but own, that it was a favour to have

^c Hos. xi. 1.

^d Pa. lxxi. 6.

^e Gen. xvii. 20, 21.

ad such a price put into your hands, by which you might have gotten wisdom, if you had not been wanting to yourselves.

(3.) Take this occasion to remember the obligations of your own infant baptism.

Though you were baptized long since, yet the tie is as strong as if you had been baptized this morning: for as time doth not wear out the guilt of our sins, so it doth not wear out the obligation of our vows. You know that it was an engagement against all sin, and to all duty; it was a bond upon your souls, to be the Lord's, and to walk and live accordingly. When you see others brought under the same bond, remember that these vows are upon *you*. And remember it,

[1.] With a renewed repentance for the breach of our baptismal covenants. Think now, and think with sorrow and shame, in how many things you have violated these engagements: (which were so very strong, and yet withal so reasonable:) though not in the essentials of the covenant, (*by stretching out the hand to a strange god,*) yet, in the several articles of the covenant, how wretchedly have we revaricated! Though in the main we hold to the covenant, and would not disclaim it for all the world, yet in how many instances do we come short! It is well for us, that every transgression in the covenant, doth not put us out of covenant: but that there is a door of hope opened; room left for a reconciliation. Repeat, therefore, of your manifold transgressions. Aggravate sin by this consideration, that it is ingratitude; that it is perfidiousness; that it is perjury; and reproach yourselves for it.

[2.] With renewed resolution of closer walking for the future. Let the sight of the administration of the ordinance quicken your sense of the vows of God, which are upon you; and confirm your purpose, to *pay that which you have vowed*. We are witnesses against ourselves, if having so solemnly *worn*, we do not *perform it*. They tell us of one in early times, who being present where a child was baptized, and being affected with the solemnity of the service, asked, Was I thus baptized? And being told he was, Why then, saith he, by the grace of God, I will not do as I have done. It is good to be often engaging ourselves afresh. *I said, I will take heed to my ways*, (Ps. xxxix. 1.) and many a thing we do, because we said, we will do it. Do this therefore, live *soberly, righteously, and piously, in this world, denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts*, because you have said that you will.

5. Join heartily in prayer to God for the child that is baptized.

Every thing is sanctified by the word and prayer; and particularly this ordinance. It is the minister's work to be the mouth of the congregation in that

duty, but it is your business to join. To be where prayer is made, is not praying, if we do not concur in what is said. Pray heartily, that God would receive the child into the embraces of his love; would impress his own image upon it; so as to sanctify it from the womb; and make the ordinance effectual to this end. That which gives prayer its prevalency, is the exercise of grace in prayer. There are two graces to be especially exercised in this prayer:

(1.) Faith in Christ the head.

It is the prayer of faith that is the effectual prayer. Act faith upon the good will of Christ to little children; upon the constitution of the covenant; the promise which is to us and to our children; the encouragement Christ hath given us to expect his gracious acceptance: these things we should realize by faith.

(2.) Love to the mystical body, and to all the members of it; even the little ones, who cannot pray for themselves.

God hath expressed a great deal of good will to little children; and we should herein be followers of him. Children are therefore publicly presented to God in this ordinance, in the face of the congregation, that they may, the more sensibly, and affectionately, be taken into the compass of our prayers. It is indeed the special duty of parents to pray for their children, but it will be a kindness to them, to help them by your prayers. The best welcome you can give the child, on its admission into the church, is to put up a fervent prayer for it. It is now become one of your *brethren and companions*, for the sake of whom, you must *pray for the peace of Jerusalem*.^f And who knows what influence the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, put up in faith, may have upon the good, the spiritual good, of the child. *If a cup of cold water, given to one of the little ones, in the name of a disciple, shall have its reward,*^g much more shall a serious believing prayer, put up for one of the little ones, in the name of a disciple, a fellow-disciple, be accepted, and taken kindly. The hearts of Christians are very much knit one to another in love, by their praying one for another. There are many expressions of Christian charity which children are not capable of receiving, but I am sure they are capable of being prayed for, and have need of our prayers. There would then be reason to hope, that the rising generation would be better than this, if we did but pray more and better for it. The children for whom you thus pray at their baptism, may be reaping the benefit of your prayers, when you are dead and gone; however, they will return into your own bosom, for true prayer is never altogether *in vain*.

6. Bless God for the addition of another member to the visible church of Christ.

It is in our duty in every thing to give thanks; but the baptism of a child affords special matter for praise.

(1.) In that the Lord Jesus is hereby honoured, and his name glorified.

It is part of the exaltation of Christ, that a seed shall serve him, and shall be accounted for to the Lord a generation. The further his name goes, the more he is honoured. The preservation of the succession of Christians is, therefore, the propagation of the honour of Christ. The multitude of the people is the glory of the prince. Christ is pleased to reckon himself glorified by the increase of his kingdom. Now that should certainly be matter of rejoicing to us, which any way tends to advance the glory of the Lord Jesus. Additions to his church he placeth among the achievements of his crown: particularly the addition of little children. Christ had but one day of triumph in all his life, and the glory of that triumph consisted much in the acclamations and Hosannas of the little children:^b nay, lest the acceptance should be limited to children who were of age properly to express themselves, it follows in the next verse, *out of the mouth of babes and sucklings,* thou hast perfected praise*; as if it were the top of Christ's praises, that he is in covenant with little children. Mention this therefore to his praise.

(2.) In that there is a precious soul hereby put into the way of salvation: though not necessarily entitled to salvation, (that doth not follow,) yet put into the way; taken into the school of Christ; enrolled amongst those who stand fair for heaven, and are intrusted with the means of grace and salvation. This is a great benefit to the child; which we should rejoice in, and bless God for; giving thanks, not only for our own interest in the covenant, and the interest of our seed, but for the interest of our friends, and of their seed. Rejoice that there is one brought into the outward court, whom we are not without hopes of meeting shortly within the veil.

If it be objected, that this child may afterwards prove wicked and vile, notwithstanding; may be a scandal to the church, and ruin his own soul; and all this, aggravated by his visible church membership: I answer, it is very true; and that one baptized at mature age, may turn out in like manner: there is no remedy; sacraments do not confer grace (*ex opere operato*) by the mere administration; but till worse appears, we must rejoice, and be thankful, in hope of the best. We all agree to rejoice, when a man is born into the world, when an heir is born into the family; and yet, perhaps, he may prove a burthen and a blot to his family, and the curse and plague of his generation.

(3.) In that the church of God is hereby increased.

There is one more brought into the family: and blessed be God, there is room enough in our Father's house, and bread enough and to spare. Rejoice that the interest of the church is hereby strengthened. The promise is, that the seed of the saints shall be *as the stars of heaven*: be thankful for the fulfilling of that promise; that the body of Christ is a growing body; that though the members of the church militant are daily removed by death, yet there are those who are baptized (*υπερ νεκρων*) in the room of the dead,ⁱ to bear up the name of Christ in the world, and to preserve a succession of professing Christians. Thus shall the seed of Christ endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven:^j and they shall fear him as long as the sun and the moon endure;^k which we should think and speak of, with a great deal of joy and thankfulness. We are not without hopes, that God hath great things in store for his church, in the latter days; that there are glorious promises to be fulfilled shortly: in reference to which, it is some encouragement, that there is a seed preserved; that the line is continued; that the entail is not quite cut off; but that a generation is rising, which may enter into that promised Canaan, though our carcasses may fall in the wilderness. for our unbelief and murmuring. And though all are not *Israel* who are of *Israel*, though all are not saints indeed who are baptized Christians, (would to God they were. yet surely among them there is a remnant, according to the election of grace, which is thus invested in church privileges. And hereby the mystical body is filling up. Which should be matter of joy and praise to us. That the hour hastens on when the number of the elect shall be completed; when *the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall have made herself ready;*^l and *the marriage of the Lamb shall come.* When, though there will be found virgins in profession, with lamps in their hands, who shall be excluded for their folly, yet the chosen remnant of Wisdom's children, the virgins who were so wise as to get oil in their vessels, such as were not only baptized with water but with the Holy Ghost, shall go in to the marriage. Then shall there be a general assembly of the church of the first-born, whose names were written in heaven. The scattered members of the mystical body, that lived in distant places, from one end of heaven to the other, and in distant ages, from the beginning to the end of time, shall all be gathered together to Christ the head, in one pure, unmixed, glorious congregation, and so presented to the Father; and altogether be put in possession of the inheritance of sons. How should the believing prospect of this day raise our thoughts, inflame our joys, and excite our most earnest desires! Even so come, Lord Jesus; come quickly.

^b Matt. xxi. 15.

* Νηπιων—children that cannot speak; και θηλαζοντων—children that are at the breast.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

^j Ps. lxxii. 5.

^k Ps. lxxxix. 29.

^l Rev. xix. 7.