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ADULT BAPTISM,
AND
The Salvation of all who die in Infancy
MAINTAINED :
IN
STRICTURES
ON A
SERMON,
ENTITLED,
“THE RIGHT OF INFANTS TO BAPTISM,
BY THE
REV. H. F. BURDER, M.A.”

BY ISAIAH BIRT.

SECOND EDITION.

That “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in the name of Jesus Christ, beginning at Jerusalem,” is a text which at once points out what the Christian religion is, and where we are to look for its beginning.

Müner's Church History, Vol. I. p. 1.

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THE task of writing the following pages has been undertaken with the more pleasure, as the writer is not in this instance required, as is too frequently the case, to repel severe censures and sarcasms. Mr. Burder appears in the field of controversy as the gentleman, the scholar, and the Christian. It is his reasoning only which forms the subject of animadversion.

Mr. Burder has very judiciously entered chiefly on the primary ground of difference between the Baptists and Pædobaptists. Till we are agreed about the subjects of baptism, it is at least premature to discuss the mode. It is indeed, as true as it is singular, that in this country all who consider adults to be the only proper subjects of baptism, uniformly adopt immersion, while those who are of opinion that infants are the proper subjects, as uniformly adopt the practice of sprinkling. The very direct and manly way in which Mr. Burder has commenced hostilities is worthy of particular attention. He has not had recourse to an inexplicable external covenant relation; nor has he detained his readers by entering into the very frivolous distinction lately attempted between house and household; nor has the question, relating to the rabbinical practice of bathing proselytes, gained much more than a passing notice. He takes a determined stand on the "covenant of grace—the covenant of redemption—the

everlasting covenant—the covenant under which we live, embracing all that man can desire, and all that Jehovah can impart.” From this covenant he professes to derive all his claims and arguments; this he makes the foundation upon which the whole of his system rests.

However distant the period to which Mr. Burder refers us in his reasoning, the controversy is to be decided, according to his own premises, by the dispensation under which we live. Go wherever we may for our arguments, they must pass the ordeal of the *New Testament* before they can be acknowledged valid and conclusive. The Gospel dispensation then is the field on which this dispute is to be decided. Mr. Burder enters it claiming the right of the *infants of believers* to baptism—his opponent ventures to insist that *believers only* are the proper subjects of that ordinance. Whilst he would not give place to any one in disclaiming all dependance on the most scripturally performed rites; he has written under a full conviction that the baptismal question involves subjects which are of the highest importance, in relation both to the kingly office of the Messiah, and to the very essence of the Christian religion.

Birmingham,
July 6, 1821.

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TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

BY the term *adult* the author intends merely to refer to moral agents, in distinction from those children who, on account of their tender years, are not in a state of responsibility, and, of course, not the subjects of a moral government.

It is on this distinction the question between the Baptists and their opponents chiefly rests.

Immersion is not peculiar to the Baptists. The Greek Church uniformly immerses in baptism; as do the Armenian Church, and the other churches of the East. This was the ancient practice of the Church of Rome, and is now the law of the Church of England. Nor does the dispute relate to the baptism of adults, or moral agents, as it is on all hands agreed, that a personal confession of faith is a necessary pre-requisite to the baptism of all such as are arrived to a state of responsibility.

The question at issue is—Are babes, who are naturally incapable of moral agency, proper subjects of Christian baptism? Or, in other words—Is the kingdom, or church of

Christ, wholly a moral administration, or is it but partially so? The last branch of the question receives an affirmative from Pædobaptism alone.

The following pages are designed to prove, that the Gospel dispensation, the church, or kingdom of Christ, is wholly a moral and spiritual government; and that the ordinance of baptism is, without exception, in perfect agreement with all the other duties of the Christian religion, a personal, a voluntary, and a reasonable service.

Birmingham,
June 4, 1823.

SECTION I.

THE STATE OF THE QUESTION.

THOUGH there are few subjects of theological discussion on which the disputants have taken more diversified ground, than that which has been occupied by the advocates of infant baptism, the cause derives its chief support from two parties.

The only peculiarity of the Baptists, as it relates to the subjects of baptism is, that they require a personal profession of faith from every individual whom they baptize. A great majority of their opponents also baptize on a profession of faith, but require that profession not from the person baptized, but from sponsors. This is strenuously opposed by the *minority*, who found the right of infants to baptism, not on the faith of sponsors, nor on the faith of the person baptized, nor indeed, on any profession of faith made at baptism, but on the holiness of "the parents or parent," which by some unexplained process, descends to their children, and gives them an exclusive right to baptism. These charge the majority with adopting a human invention, in the use of sponsors, whilst they themselves, are with equal justice, accused of retaining a jewish prejudice in their sentiments of relative holiness. Both parties, by

rejecting *personal* religion, and acting on the supposition of that which is relative, are equally opposed to the Baptists. The majority of Pædo-baptists in general believe in baptismal regeneration, while the minority as generally assert that the children of believers have a common interest with their parents in the covenant of grace. The blessing claimed on each side is of the utmost importance, yet neither party refers to evidence for its belief; but they both, like the advocates of transubstantiation, believe, notwithstanding the entire absence of evidence. It is not by its fruits we are made acquainted with the value or importance of infant baptism. With one class of its patrons it assumes regeneration without conversion, and with the other, holiness without piety. It is, on every ground hitherto taken for its support, a *cause* that in this world produces no *effect*—a *means* connected with no *end*—a *cloud* that affords no *rain*—a *tree* that yields no *fruit*.

At the baptism of a babe, the subject of the ordinance, who is acknowledged to be the individual most interested in the service, neither exercises religious feeling, nor performs moral duty, nor evinces any grace of the Spirit. In this most singular act of religion, if act it may be called, there is neither adoration, prayer, nor praise. In the estimation of Pædobaptists themselves, it has not the same character and affinities as the other Christian duties. Even they are obliged to treat it as perfectly unique. They find it to be impossible to associate it with the other duties and ordinances of the Gospel. The principles of infant baptism are, by its most strenuous advocates, confined to one occasion only, and to a very short period. Nothing can be more difficult than the classification of infant baptism. It is next to impossible to find out its name, or to define its character in either morals or religion. It admits of no comparison, and has no likeness in the church below, or in the church above. It is neither militant nor triumphant. It neither mourns with those that are sorrowful, nor rejoices

with those that rejoice. The subject of the ordinance is neither moved by fear, nor actuated by faith, nor constrained by love; he performs no duty, exercises no virtue, offers no devotion. It is wholly a negation; we can only say what it is not.

Mr. Burder is in the minority of Pædobaptists, and pleads for the covenant relation in behalf of his Independent brethren, with whom the Baptists have only this one point of difference. Except at the baptismal font, both in principle and practice, the Baptists and Independents are every where in unison with each other. In their ministry, in receiving members into their respective churches, at the table of the Lord, and in adult baptism, they are agreed that religion is personal, the fruit of the new birth, and that it cannot be evinced but by repentance and faith—love and obedience. This generally allowed principle is uniformly adopted by the Baptists in the ordinance of baptism. They insist on nothing new or different at baptism from that which their brethren, the Independents, equally require in their general discourses, and in the formation and discipline of their churches. But not so Mr. Burder and his brethren. They forsake their general principle at the baptismal font. When baptizing infants they are silent on the new birth and its evidences—repentance, faith, love and obedience. On these occasions they refrain from insisting on the absolute necessity of personal religion, which they so earnestly and uniformly enforce on all other subjects. Though they indignantly deny the efficacy of rightly administered ordinances, they most zealously plead for what amounts to much more, the blessings of the covenant of grace by virtue of pious parentage and relative holiness; sentiments which they do not admit at any other season. Thus at the baptism of babes they really differ from themselves as much as they do from the Baptists, whose principles are uniformly acted upon by both parties in every other instance.

Mr. Burder speaks of "impugning our opinions;" but this expression must have escaped him through inadvertence. So far as relates to the subjects of baptism, the Baptists hold not a single sentiment, but what is held also by their Independent brethren. In adult baptism they are in perfect agreement. Both parties require a personal profession of faith from the adult, as the necessary pre-requisite to baptism; whether the candidate be a heathen, a Jew, or one born of Christian parents. Mr. Burder may complain that we refuse to follow him into the regions of infant baptism; but so far as we do advance, it is impossible for him to impugn our sentiments, without being in perfect contradiction to himself. Whenever he baptizes adults, he acts on the same principles with the Baptists.

Infant baptism forms a distinct and separate case, with its own peculiar and exclusive sentiments. As it relates to the principles on which our brethren act in adult and infant baptism, they have two perfectly distinct baptisms. So very distinct and opposed are their principles, at these two baptisms, that their variance with themselves, is to the full as irreconcilable as is their difference with us. When they baptize babes, it is impossible for them to act on the same principles as when they baptize adults. The Independents hold sentiments which are not held by the Baptists; but the Baptists hold not any sentiment that is not also held by the Independents. The Independents entirely coincide with the faith and practice of the Baptists, but to these they superadd the faith and practice of infant baptism.

When our brethren can bring the principles of infant baptism into perfect agreement with their own principles in adult baptism, in the execution of their ministry, in their private and public devotions, and at the Lord's Table, the controversy on the subjects of Christian baptism between them and us will be terminated. When as Pædobaptists our brethren are consistent with themselves, then we also shall be one with them.

That the offspring of mankind share with their parents in national, civil and religious circumstances of advantage or injury, is no matter of dispute. Natural or circumstantial privileges by no means enter into the question of baptism. The Baptists yield to none of their fellow christians, in appreciating the advantages attendant on children being born in a country where the true God is acknowledged, his testimonies made known, and his prescribed worship observed. No class of the community can estimate more highly than they do, the superior privileges of those children, whose parents by their example and pious care, train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. On these points there is no difference. It is to the claim of a special and exclusive interest, for the descendants of believers, in spiritual and eternal blessings, that Mr. Burder gives his support, and to which the Baptists object. It is on this question that, in these strictures, we are at issue.

Mr. Burder founds the right of the infants of believers to baptism, on their interest with their parents in the "covenant of grace, the covenant of redemption, the everlasting covenant, embracing all that man can desire, and all that Jehovah can impart;" and in relation to these high considerations, which affect the immortal destinies of the human race, we claim for all other infants a perfect equality. We most earnestly enter our protest against the assumption, that there is a privileged order of babes in relation to the mercies of God.

In our estimation the salvation of all those who die in infancy, depends solely on the sovereign good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus. It is even so because it seemeth good in his sight. From the nature of the case babes cannot be under a moral administration. Nor is their destiny determined by the requirements of either the legal or evangelical dispensations, both of which are most evidently systems of moral government, and, of course, those only

can be the subjects of either, who are moral agents. Deriving then, as we do, all our sentiments and persuasions on this subject from the excellencies of the Divine character, with respect to deceased infants there can be nothing either partial or exclusive in our system.

Our own departed babes and those of all others are contemplated by us, in relation to the Divine favour, in exactly the same view, and with the highest satisfaction. On the state of those who die in infancy, the Scriptures give many pleasing intimations, yet they afford us no explicit information. It appears to the Divine wisdom best for us, that this should be a matter of confidence in the known perfections and government of God, rather than of express revelation; so that our sentiments on this subject should be founded on inferences drawn from what is certainly revealed. Being assured that the Judge of all the earth will do right, we cannot doubt that those who die in infancy, who are all equal in themselves, will be treated with equality by Him who is no respecter of persons, just in all his ways, and righteous in all his doings. As the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, and as he has made ample provision for the salvation of the chief of sinners, we have the utmost confidence that, in his infinite kindness, all who die at this period of life, are safe and blessed. Respecting them we entertain the fullest persuasion, "That as sin has reigned unto death, even so grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Every one acquainted with ecclesiastical history knows, that the supposed necessity of baptism and the Lord's supper to salvation, was the ground taken by the ancients for administering those ordinances to infants. In this part of Christendom, the notion of the eucharist being essential to the salvation of dying babes is exploded, and the practice

* Rom. v. 21

of infant communion has consequently ceased. Let it only be conceded that dying babes without distinction are saved, and the practice of infant baptism would also very speedily and equally decline. The whole solicitude of Christians would then be directed to moral agents and personal religion. The state of dying infants in the question between the Baptists and Pædobaptists is of great importance. Even Dr. Mant allows that a course of sin will obliterate the benefits of baptismal regeneration, and that repentance, faith, and a holy life, are necessary to the salvation of the adult. Mr. Jerram also says, "She (i. e. the Church of England) warns us most faithfully and affectionately of the danger of an evil course of life; she calls upon us frequently and diligently to examine ourselves; she assures us of the insufficiency of her sacraments to bless us, if we are strangers to a *living faith*." Dr. Wardlaw, at large, proves that "to be a Christian implies being a disciple of Christ, and a believer of his doctrines:—being a lover of Christ:—an obedient subject and imitator of Christ:—and an expectant of Christ, or one who looks for his second coming."* And Mr. Burder assures his young friends, that notwithstanding their pious parentage and early dedication, unless they are born of the Spirit, and dedicate *themselves* to God, it is impossible for them to enter into his kingdom. Now this is precisely what the Baptists insist upon. So far as relates to moral agents there is a perfect agreement. Of course the difference between the Baptists and their opponents respects the state of infants, of dying infants, and of them only. The Baptists, with grateful confidence, esteem all children who die in infancy to be equally and certainly saved, without any distinction; whilst Pædobaptism, with a *partial*, gloomy, and awful aspect, makes a privileged order amongst dying babes—placing a comparatively small number in a state of regeneration, and

* Discourses on the Socinian Controversy, p. 378, 379.

a very few others in the covenant of grace; leaving the vast and incalculable majority destitute of those blessings, which are essentially necessary to their future and eternal felicity.* Who that impartially considers this subject, can avoid being thankful that the *Bible* does not lead him to so awful a conclusion, and that he is not by Divine authority connected with a practice, the implications of which are so truly appalling? But although the sentiments of the Baptists on this subject, are so benevolent and unrestricted as to lead them to conclude, that all who die in infancy are without exception saved; and although they cherish the most serious objections to Pædobaptism, on account of the very exclusive and gloomy aspect it bears towards the great majority of those who die in infancy;—yet such is the power of prejudice, and the influence of custom, that it is by no means uncommon for us to be represented as entertaining opinions, and observing a practice, most inimical to the state of infancy. But “wisdom is justified of her children.”

* The High-Church Clergy, who so freely and severely censure the doctrines of Calvin on account of their predestinarian principles, would do well to consider, that their practice of infant baptism, and their notion of baptismal regeneration, imply a reprobation of myriads of children who die in infancy, which far surpasses in horror any doctrine which even they themselves can impute to Calvinism. These Divines should first take the beam out of their own eye, before they attempt to remove the mote out of their brother's eye.

SECTION II.

ON THE COVENANT OF GRACE MADE WITH
ABRAHAM.

HAVING stated the question at issue between the Baptists and their opponents, and the ground occupied by Mr. Burder in the controversy, I proceed to notice the arguments with which he maintains his opinion, that the infants of believers have an exclusive right to baptism; for he by no means pleads for the right of all infants to that ordinance, but for the right of "those infants only whose parents, or one of whose parents, we should be authorized to baptize, in case baptism had not before been administered."* The correct title to his sermon would have been, "The exclusive right of the infants of believers to baptism."

Mr. Burder says, "the point of primary importance in the present argument is, the connection established under the former economy between parents and their infant offspring. By virtue of that connection infants were circumcised, and if that connection has never been by Divine appointment dissolved or diminished, then by virtue of that connection, infants should be baptized." This connection, thus stated to have been established under the former economy, by virtue of which, Mr. Burder says, "infants were circumcised," he represents as a connection in the covenant of grace. He does not even intimate that the covenant of grace was in being, or that such a connection subsisted between parents and their offspring, previously to the days of Abraham, but maintains that in his time, and with him the Divine Being made the covenant of grace, containing a

* Sermon, p. 36. 2nd Edition.

stipulation or establishment, which united children with their believing parents in all its interesting privileges, and that by virtue of this stipulation infants were formerly circumcised, and of course are now to be baptized. Mr. Burder makes this connection between parents and their offspring, and their consequent right to circumcision and to baptism, the basis upon which he raises his whole structure. Every thing which he advances by way of argument, is either in confirmation or illustration of the connection originally established with Abraham. "The identical principle which pervades and unites the whole of the argument now adduced," says Mr. Burder, "is that infants are to be baptized *solely* on the ground of connection with their parents."*

It becomes necessary, therefore, to enquire into the nature of the connection for which Mr. Burder pleads, and also to examine the evidence by which he attempts to support it. If it were merely stated that the offspring of believers are related to their parents as children are in general, there could be no dispute. Of course every thing that is common between parents and children is out of the present question. The connection for which Mr. Burder pleads between the parent and the child, is of a spiritual and divine nature. "It is a connection in the covenant of grace—the covenant of redemption—the everlasting covenant, embracing all that man can desire, and all that Jehovah can impart."†

Such a connection as this, if really existing, is certainly of infinite importance, and worthy of the most unreserved confidence of all those who are interested in it, and of all the ability and zeal which are employed in its support. But then one is naturally disposed to ask, by what evidence is the existence of this *all interesting* connection maintained? First, by the covenant of grace made with Abraham;

* Sermon, p. 25. 2nd Edition.

† Sermon, p. 7.

secondly, by the instituted rite of circumcision. These are in fact the only two arguments produced by Mr. Burder in support of this connection. They are the pillars on which his whole fabric rests. What he says of the practice of the apostles, of proselyte baptism, of the practice of the churches in the early ages of Christianity, is chiefly subsidiary to his sentiments on the covenant with Abraham and circumcision. "To maintain the right of infants to baptism," says Mr. Burder, "by adducing the practice of the apostles as recorded in the New Testament, the point to be ascertained is, whether the connection between parents and children, which appears with so much prominence under the former economy, was recognized by the apostles in the administration of baptism."* Mr. Burder is well aware that his explanation of the Abrahamic covenant, and the design of circumcision, is the sole support of his whole system of infant baptism. If the connection for which he pleads cannot be maintained on this ground, it must be entirely abandoned; for there is not any thing else within the whole range of Scripture, reason, or fact, on which it can with any degree of plausibility be founded. If the covenant made with Abraham, and the rite of circumcision, will not prove that the children of believers have a connection with their parents in "the covenant under which we live, the covenant of grace, the covenant of redemption, the everlasting covenant, embracing all that man can desire, and all that Jehovah can impart," the connection itself is but a mere human prejudice, and like the house built upon the sand, those who trust in it will find it conducive rather to their ruin than to their safety. But if such a connection be supported by Divine authority, it infallibly secures to the children of all believers, not only a state of grace in this life, but also a state of glory in the world to come—"all that man can desire, and all that Jehovah can impart." Impressed by the consideration that Mr. Burder attempts

* Sermon, p. 15.

to support, either an awful delusion, or a most momentous truth, one cannot but approach his arguments on this subject with great seriousness and solicitude.

Mr. Burder lays the basis of his system by stating,

I. That "the covenant which God made with Abraham was the covenant of grace, and therefore the same in substance with that under which we now live.*"

There can be no doubt that God made with Abraham, as he did with David, and as he does with all true believers, an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; nor, that the covenant of grace, which is an immutable and everlasting covenant, was the same, not only in substance, but in all respects, in the days of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and David, as it is in the days in which we live. The covenant of grace has been revealed at different periods with more or less light, but in itself it has ever been unalterable, and has never suffered the shadow of a change. Like its glorious Mediator and Surety, it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We never question but the covenant of grace is the same in all ages, nor that the people of God of every description, have in all periods of time lived under its administration. But by Mr. Burder's statements one would be led to suppose that the covenant of grace was *originally* made with Abraham—that he was the *head* of this covenant—and that the interests of all others in it depended upon their connection with him.

Whatever contrarieties it may involve, and however reluctant Mr. Burder may be to concede the point, it is evidently essential to the justness and force of his whole argument, that not only Abraham should be a federal head in the covenant of grace, but also that every believing Gentile should sustain the same character and office. According to his system, the promise made to Christ and his seed, was made to Abraham and his natural posterity,

* Sermon, p. 6.

and is also made to every Gentile believer, and his or her offspring.

The Jews put in their claim for the Lord to be their God, on the ground of natural descent from one father, even Abraham; but the children of believing Gentiles are taught, by Mr. Burder's system, to claim the same relation to the Divine Being from their connection with their immediate parents. Thus, according to Mr. Burder, every believer now is made an Abraham, a federal head, a Christ in the covenant of grace to all his or her natural offspring, who are represented as having an interest in its immortal blessings, solely by a connection with their parents.

This federal relation, and these high claims would be all just and true in relation to our Lord Jesus Christ; but certainly cannot be so in reference to Abraham, unless Mr. Burder be prepared to prove that Abraham was an original party in the covenant of redemption and grace, that his interest in this covenant was solely by appointment, right, and merit, and not by mere favour,—that he represented others, and was the surety, not the recipient of its blessings.

Whatever Mr. Burder's system or argument, as a Pædobaptist, may require; as a Gospel minister, he most decidedly must confess that our Lord and Saviour is the sole and unrivalled federal head in the covenant of redemption and grace,—that he alone is the representative of others, who engaged to perform its conditions and secure its success; and that he himself is the Prophet, Priest, and King in its administration. Let Pædobaptism be out of sight, and our brethren will, with one heart, maintain that, as the federal head in the covenant of redemption and grace, our Lord is all-sufficient,—that he neither needs, nor has, nor indeed could have any partner or coadjutor,—that he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there were none with him.

So far are the Holy Scriptures from representing Abraham as the federal head in the covenant of grace, that he

is scarcely, if at all exhibited even as a type of the Messiah. In this point of view, Melchizedec, David, and others are greatly pre-eminent above Abraham. On account of his eminent faith and obedience, Abraham is presented to us as the pattern of believers, and has the honour to be styled "the father of all them that believe,* and the friend of God." But in "the covenant of grace, the covenant of redemption, the everlasting covenant, the covenant under which we live," he has no pre-eminence over any other true believer in our Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham saw his day, and was glad, and obtained his interest in the covenant of grace, and a participation of its blessings, solely by faith in *him* who is "head over all things to the church;" and this honour have all the saints of every age, country, and description under heaven. They are, without exception, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, whose righteousness is unto all, and upon all that believe, for there is no difference."

On other occasions our brethren insist, with all earnestness, that it is by believing in Christ ourselves, not through a connection with Abraham, or any other believer, that we are accepted of God, and obtain an interest in his covenant and grace—that "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life"†—that we have a spiritual relation to Abraham, and are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, solely by faith in Him, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"—that Christ only is the door, by which if any man enter in he shall be saved—and that it

* It was not uncommon for the writers of the Holy Scriptures to give the title of father to men who were pre-eminent in professions, virtues, or stations. Thus, Jabel was the father of such as dwell in tents; Jubal was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ; Abraham the father of all them that believe; Job a father to the poor; and God made Joseph a father to Pharaoh.

† John iii, 36,

is not the doctrine of Scripture, that if we are Abraham's seed then we are Christ's; but, "if we are Christ's then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

In the covenant of grace Abraham could not be the federal head. He was an eminent servant of God, and his faith and obedience will be celebrated to the latest period of time, as a pattern for all believers; yet being but a creature, and a sinful creature, he could not contract and engage for others. Like the rest of our fallen race who believe in the Son of God, "his faith was counted to him for righteousness," and he received out of the Redeemer's fulness those spiritual and divine blessings which were freely given to him of God.

As Abraham was a sinner saved by pure favour, through the mediation of the Messiah, all his interest in the covenant of grace—the covenant of redemption—the everlasting covenant, could only be in a personal and individual capacity, and that entirely through the abounding mercy of God. The promises made to Abraham, in the covenant of grace, had their accomplishment in his own person. He stood in need of the blessings contained in them, they were essential to his salvation, they formed his character, they were his support and consolation during his pilgrimage, and they constitute his eternal blessedness in glory.

As before intimated, whilst Abraham had an undoubted personal interest in the covenant of grace, the covenant was by no means originally made with him, nor was that patriarch the federal head in any of its engagements. He was admitted into this covenant, like all other believers, solely on the footing of mere mercy, and like them obtained his whole right and title to its high privileges and blessings by faith in the Son of God. In the spiritual vine, Abraham was not the stock, but a branch,—in the mystical body, he was not the head, but a member. In the covenant of grace, Abraham was neither mediator, surety, nor saviour, but, like all other believers, an entire dependant on him

who filled up these offices, and sustained these characters. It follows, then, as a necessary consequence, that no one can claim an interest in "the covenant of grace—the covenant of redemption—the everlasting covenant—the covenant under which we live," on account of natural descent from Abraham, any more than from a relationship to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Job, or any other individual of our race. Besides that of our Lord Jesus Christ, "there is none other name under heaven given amongst men by which we must be saved. Neither is there salvation in any other." Thus what Mr. Burder denominates "the strong and conclusive argument founded on the covenant of grace,"* turns out to be a mere hypothesis, unsupported except by Jewish prejudice.

SECTION III.

ON THE COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION MADE WITH ABRAHAM.

WE now proceed to examine Mr. Burder's second argument, by which he endeavours to support the connection between believing parents and their offspring, in the covenant of grace, and their consequent right to baptism. His argument is this:—"That the ordinance of circumcision, which belonged to the covenant with Abraham, was designed to exhibit the very same blessings which are denoted by the ordinance of baptism."† "The argument," he says, "may be divested of all complexity. The covenant with

* Page 11.

† Page 9.

Abraham is the same in substance with that under which we live. The same blessings of that covenant are denoted both by circumcision and by baptism. The covenant, then, being the same, and the ordinance being in import the same, the subjects entitled to its administration are also the same. But infants were entitled to circumcision on the ground of their connection with their parents; therefore infants, on the ground of their connection with their parents, are entitled to baptism.”*

Notwithstanding Mr. Burder gives this statement as “divested of all complexity,” I conceive there would be very much to unravel and explain to make it harmonize with the apostle’s testimony, where he says, “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again unto every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.”† If baptism and circumcision do really relate to the same covenant, and are of the same import, and require the same subjects, it is at least most surprising that the apostle should so earnestly testify against circumcision, and in the same letter to the same church, say, “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”‡

Were the Abrahamic and the Christian covenant the same, and were circumcision and baptism designed to exhibit the very same blessings, and the subjects entitled to the administration of each rite also the same, the Jewish rite of circumcision must have been a proper and just substitute and representative for the ordinance of Christian baptism. But the Jews, who were the seed of Abraham, and had been circumcised, were not exempt from baptism; this ordinance was enjoined on them equally with the uncircumcised Gentiles. For a considerable period, the more weak and prejudiced believing Jews scrupulously attended

* Page 11. † Gal. v. 2, 3. ‡ Gal. iii. 26, 27.

to both circumcision and baptism. One rite was observed out of respect to Moses, the other in honour of Christ. In the most early and authentic records, we are informed that the apostles repelled attempts made by Jewish prejudice to add circumcision to baptism in the churches composed of Gentiles. The substitution of one rite for the other does not appear to have been even contemplated at that period. It was reserved for records, in all respects very inferior to the Acts of the Apostles, to assure us that the same prejudice at length made successful efforts to give the Gospel church a Jewish character, by substituting baptism for circumcision.

Mr. Burder's statement not only labours under these difficulties, but the argument itself for the special interest of the children of believers in spiritual blessings, appears to us exceedingly inconclusive, and attended with the utmost perplexity and doubt.

The whole argument is founded on the covenant with Abraham and his seed. The relation that subsists between any Gentile believer and Abraham, is only by faith in Christ, and entirely of a spiritual nature. But the connection which exists between the believer and his offspring, is only by natural descent, and solely according to the flesh. It cannot, from the nature of the case, be by faith, nor can there be any possible evidence of spirituality. The argument is this. The Gentile believer has a relation to Abraham, and is entitled to all spiritual blessings with him, solely by faith in Christ Jesus;—therefore his babe, who has only a natural relation to him, and can have no faith in Christ, is one of Abraham's seed, and, as such, shares with his parent in all the privileges and blessings of his spiritual and believing relation to the Son of God, and through him to Abraham, and the whole household of faith!!

Indeed, on this point, it would require the utmost ingenuity and ability to reconcile Mr. Burder, not only with the apostle, with the nature of the case, and with matter of fact, but with himself. He states, that circumcision signified

precisely the same blessings as baptism ;* and says on **Rom. vi. 3—6**, “To be baptized into his death, *i. e.* the death of Christ, is to be baptized into the faith of his death, and into the profession of faith in his death, as an atoning sacrifice for sin. And being thus baptized, and believing in him, we have communion with him in his death ; we enjoy a participation of the glorious benefits which result from his death and resurrection ; and we are made conformable to the design of his death and resurrection.”†

It is necessary to be fully aware of the powerful influence of hypothesis, to be persuaded that any one can considerately believe, that “circumcision signified precisely” this confession of faith in the Son of God, and communion with him in the events and blessings of his death and resurrection. Yet Mr. Burder says, this is the meaning of baptism ; and that “circumcision, the sign of the covenant with Abraham, signified precisely the same blessings which are denoted by baptism.”

Without taking further notice of this evident discrepancy between the inspired apostle and Mr. Burder, and between Mr. Burder and himself, in reply to his, in my view, confused and very erroneous reasoning, let it be observed, that there were many things which belonged to Abraham, and were promised to him and his posterity according to the flesh, that by no means belong to us who live under the Gospel dispensation.

Believers of every description, and of all ages, have a common interest with Abraham in all the blessings *peculiar* to the covenant of grace ; but in the divine dispensations, previous and preparatory to the appearance of the Messiah, it frequently occurred, that some of the servants of God were placed in distinguished situations, and received special appointments, accompanied with promises appropriate and peculiar to those stations and appointments. We might

* Pages 10, 11. † Page 42.

instance Noah, Moses, Joshua, David, and others. This was eminently the case with Abraham. He occupied a very distinguished station, and received a peculiar appointment, to which were annexed promises in which believers have no common right or interest. Many shared with that patriarch in the events which arose from this station, this appointment, and these promises, who, not being interested with him in the covenant of grace, will never participate in its spiritual blessings, nor sit down with him in the kingdom of God.

Abraham and his posterity were set apart according to the flesh, to be the medium of introducing the Saviour to our world. To Abraham it was promised that kings and nations should come out of his loins, and that his descendants, by Isaac, should be a distinct people, under the special government of God,—that they should be delivered from the Egyptian bondage, and possess the land of Canaan as their own inheritance, where he himself was only a stranger and pilgrim. In the accomplishment of these promises the Lord exhibited himself to them in the twofold character of their civil ruler and their God. But these things were by no means common to the people of God in general. Now the *covenant of grace* secures all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus to every individual interested in it; and all believers who lived before the days of Abraham—in his time—and in every age of the world, have been equally entitled to these spiritual and divine blessings. But none, except those who belonged to the nation descended from Abraham, had any claim upon the promises which were peculiar to him. In the covenant of grace Abraham, like all other believers, stood in his individual capacity, and faith in the Messiah gave to him, as it does to them, a personal right to its immortal blessings. But to be entitled to the peculiar promises made to Abraham, it was necessary to be related to that patriarch by natural or civil ties, and to be circumcised; for these promises

were made to him in a relative character, and conditionally, as the head of the family and nation that should descend from him by Isaac and Jacob. Of course, these promises were not, like those belonging to the covenant of grace, fulfilled to Abraham in his own person; they had their accomplishment in his very remote progeny: and hence the necessity of his posterity being preserved, by rites and ordinances, a distinct and peculiar people from all other nations.

Now it becomes a matter of just and necessary enquiry, whether circumcision was an appendage to the covenant of grace, or to the peculiar and national promises made to Abraham? That circumcision belonged solely to the peculiar and national promises made to that patriarch, will appear, if we consider—

1. That the covenant of grace was in operation, and its saving benefits conferred, for two thousand years before circumcision had any existence; *so that there could be no natural or necessary connection between this rite and the covenant of grace.* But the national promises made to Abraham were accompanied by the institution of circumcision; and a submission to this rite was made absolutely necessary to an interest in these promises. Although a man had been the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, if uncircumcised, he was, by the express command of God, to be cut off from the Jewish nation, and from all its privileges. A stranger, when circumcised, became entitled to them, but a home-born son, by not submitting to this rite, forfeited his claims, and was excluded from the inheritance.

2. Abraham had been called of God, and made a partaker of his grace, many years before he received the rite of circumcision; so that however the reception of this covenant served to confirm or seal his faith, it made not the least addition to his security in the divine blessings. Nor would his interest in the spiritual and eternal privileges of the covenant of grace have been in any degree diminished,

if the covenant of circumcision had been given to any other patriarch and his posterity.

3. When circumcision was enjoined, it was not on the people of God in general, who were all of them equally interested in the covenant of grace, but on the family of Abraham alone—himself—his male descendants, with their male servants and slaves. Melchizedec, Shem, Lot, and other believers in the days of Abraham, were equal sharers with him in the covenant of grace, but not one of them had an interest in the promises peculiar to his family. Of course, neither they themselves, nor their offspring, nor their domestics were circumcised. Nor did piety in the individual, nor pious parentage, constitute either the reason or rule of circumcision. The command of God only made it a *law*, and natural descent, or servitude in the Jewish nation, was the prescribed rule of its operation. Circumcision was evidently no other than first a family, and then a national rite. There was no peculiarity in Abraham, or distinction from Melchizedec, or other believers in the covenant of grace; but in the covenant of circumcision every thing was peculiar to that patriarch and his posterity, and to them in distinction from every other family and nation; consequently there is no discrimination or propriety, in styling the covenant of grace the Abrahamic covenant. The Abrahamic covenant is the appropriate and most discriminating appellation of the covenant of circumcision, which was a covenant originally made with Abraham, as the father and head of the Jewish nation, the promises of which were accomplished, not in his own time and person, but through future ages, in the people and nation who were his descendants.

4. Circumcision was enjoined as the absolute condition of a covenant; so that they who did not perform the condition could not be parties to, or interested in that covenant. But Abraham obtained the blessings of the covenant of

grace without circumcision, and they have been partaken of by persons apart from the Jewish people, and of course uncircumcised, in all generations.

5. In the covenant of grace there never has existed any pre-eminence of sex, or distinction between the male and the female; "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." But circumcision respects only a part of our common nature, and in this instance also shews its relation to a very circumscribed economy.

6. Circumcision did not serve to distinguish between the godly and ungodly, but merely between the family of Abraham, and all other families, whether pious or irreligious: but the blessings of the covenant of grace have always made a religious discrimination. In every age these blessings only have drawn the line of demarcation between the righteous and the wicked, between those that serve God, and those that serve him not, both among the Jews and the Gentiles.

7. Piety has, with undeviating uniformity, been the only criterion by which men could judge of their interest in the covenant of grace, and ascertain their right to its blessings. But the right to circumcision, and the promises peculiar to the covenant with Abraham, could be established by carnal descent from that patriarch, by servitude, or by proselytism to the Jewish religion, and by these means exclusively. Every man born a Jew, or a slave to a Jew, was to be circumcised, and if by a mere profession he became a Jew, and submitted to circumcision, his rights were secured. But, if a man were as perfect and patient as Job, and as upright and godly as Elihu, unless he became a Jew, he was not admissible to circumcision, or to any lot or inheritance in the particular and national promises made to Abraham.

8. Circumcision so perfectly accorded with the other Jewish rites, as to admit of its being incorporated with them, and therefore is denominated by the highest authority "*the law of Moses*."* The observance of it was essential to the same end, an interest in the national covenant made with Abraham, and the possession of Jewish privileges. The breach of it was also accompanied by the same penalty as that affixed to the violation of Mosaic institutions, the offender being cut off from the people. But God has in no instance made the performance of any rite essentially necessary to a participation in the covenant and blessings of his grace.

9. Whilst the piety of the servants of God, who neither descended from Abraham, nor belonged to his family, did not oblige them or theirs to be circumcised; Ishmael, and the male slaves of that patriarch, whether converted or not, were compelled to undergo the painful rite. But the Gospel does not require any service that is in any degree analagous to the exclusive and compulsory law of circumcision. Every requisition of the Gospel is addressed to the heart, and all its accepted services are personal, voluntary, and performed from a principle of love.

10. When the Messiah had made his appearance, and the great design of God in separating the Jews from other people had been accomplished, the peculiar national promises to Abraham, and the rite of circumcision, with the whole Jewish ritual, became obsolete. They were old things which passed away. Both natural descent and circumcision, on which Mr. Burder sets such high value, are expressly specified by the apostle Paul as things, the gain of which he had renounced for Christ,

* John vii. 23.

and he accounted them but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

11. The gospel dispensation is the pure administration of the covenant of grace under the reign of the Messiah. His government, which is wholly spiritual, extends to all people, nations, and tongues, without exception or distinction, from whom by his word and Spirit, he collects and forms a people for himself, who are "a chosen generation, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should shew forth the praises of him who calleth them out of darkness into his marvellous light." These are all born and taught of God—they believe in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—they love him sincerely and supremely—they serve him from conviction and choice. Whilst in this world they share in his grace, and finally they will be with him where he is, to behold and enjoy his glory for ever.

With this gracious, spiritual, and divine dispensation, both the ordinances of the Gospel most strictly accord. God is a spirit, and the time is now come when all who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Thus it appears that circumcision was solely an appendage to the national and temporary covenant which God made with Abraham—that pious parentage constituted neither the reason nor rule of its administration—and that it was merely a Jewish rite, appointed by God, like its fellows, for a particular purpose, and for a specific time. This time being filled up, and the Divine purpose accomplished by the appearance and work of the Son of God, it was laid aside, with the whole ritual of the Jews, as a garment worn out and of no further service.

The rite of circumcision then, on which Mr. Burder so confidently erects his fabric of Infant baptism, is no other than one of the carnal, temporary, and abrogated ordinances imposed on the nation of the Jews until the time of refor-

mation. Mr. Burder lays much stress on the holy instruction and tendency of circumcision; but this is what belonged to all the rites of Divine appointment. Purity and mercy were amongst the most conspicuous features of the ritual of Jehovah, in opposition to the impure and cruel rites of the false deities. So that if this be made a reason for the retaining of one rite of God's appointment, it will equally justify our retaining the Jewish ritual without exception, for the whole "having a shadow of good things to come," both aided and confirmed the graces of the spiritual worshippers, and had also a tendency to convince the people in general of their sinfulness, to instruct them in the Divine mercy, and in the nature of that holiness which is required by God, "the law of whose house, the whole limit thereof round about, has in all ages been most holy."

SECTION IV.

ON THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM.

Whilst it is so evident that circumcision had its rise with, and most intimate relation to the distinct and national covenant which God made with Abraham, and gave even the very title to the Jewish economy with which it was both incorporated and abrogated, it is as evident that the gospel ordinance of baptism, as instituted by our Saviour and administered by his apostles, had no relation, as circumcision had, to the national promises made to Abraham, nor to natural descent, nor to civil relations, nor to *particular sex*, nor to Jewish rites, nor to Jewish privileges; but, like its associate the Lord's-supper, it is the personal service of

faith, and its sole relation is to that spiritual empire which was devised and secured in “the covenant under which we now live,—the covenant of grace, the covenant of redemption, the everlasting covenant, embracing all that man can desire, and all that Jehovah can impart.”

This will appear if we consider,

1. That the kingdom of Christ, or the gospel dispensation, is the fullest manifestation of the Divine favour towards the human race in Christ Jesus, and that this merciful dispensation is wholly spiritual, and its blessings realized only by faith. We have a redemption, a Great High Priest, a holy place, a mercy seat, the blood of atonement, most abundant blessings, a rest that remaineth, a way to its possession, and a leader and commander to conduct us to it; but none of these come in contact with our senses. They are all revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and are perceived, and contemplated only by faith, which is the evidence of things not seen. So that it is impossible for those who are either by a natural or moral *incapacity* destitute of faith, to see the glory, or to participate the blessings of this dispensation, or in any respect to engage under its administration. It is denominated the kingdom of heaven; and all who belong to it must both live and walk by faith, which is of the operation of the Spirit of God, and worketh by love.

2. In agreement with the spiritual nature of this kingdom are all its subjects. They are born not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. “They are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;” “for with the heart they believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth confess unto salvation.” And “there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

It is impossible for words more explicitly to exclude all relative considerations from the question of discipleship,

or to exhibit religion as consisting only in personal conviction, faith, and obedience, than those which are employed by the writers of the New Testament. "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God."* "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children." "But as many as received him, to them gave he power (the right) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."† In the utmost consistency with these characteristics are the instrument, persons, and agency employed to establish and enlarge the empire of our Saviour.

(1.) The gospel itself is the instrument. "Go preach the gospel to every creature." "It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. The preaching of the cross, *i. e.* the gospel of Christ, is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Men are born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto us."

(2.) The persons employed are wholly inefficient of themselves. They are men of similar passions and infirmities with others. The gospel treasure is put into earthen vessels. They receive their qualifications from the ascended Saviour himself, "who gave some apostles and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

(3.) The agency by which the instrument and ministry are rendered effectual is that of the Holy Spirit: "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God that giveth the increase." Hence our Lord, when he departed, promised

* Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8.

† John i. 12, 13.

to send the Spirit that he might always abide. The word, when successful, is said to come in demonstration of the Spirit; and the Gospel dispensation is spoken of as "the ministration of the Spirit." The whole is in perfect correspondence with the genius of the dispensation. It is adapted to accountable creatures only; and all things are of God. The spiritual and holy existence, so essentially implied in the Gospel economy, evidently requires moral agency. No one supposes that babes enter into heaven with the incapacities of infancy. In the period of their souls departure, we all conclude that their latent powers so expand, that they enter into the celestial state intelligent creatures, with faculties suited to a moral government, and which capacitate them for the knowledge, service, and enjoyment of God.

Nor does the Gospel dispensation require this natural and moral capacity less than the future state, it being precisely of the same nature. Those who enter into the Gospel church are said to be "come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.* Both the Gospel and the heavenly states possess all the characteristics of a moral administration, and are equally styled the kingdom of heaven and of God. For admission into each, the Scriptures require the same pre-requisite. We must be born again to enter into, or see, either kingdom. In both states the subjects are all delivered from the power of darkness, translated into the kingdom of the Son of God, and blessed with all spiritual blessings. They alike worship in spirit,

* Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24.

and are equally the servants and sons of God. If it be impossible for us to admit of the incapacities of infancy in one department of this moral, spiritual, and holy administration, for the very same reasons it is as impossible for us to conceive of their existence in the other, as the whole difference between the kingdoms of grace and glory exists, not in their nature, but solely in their circumstances and degree. Here we see through a glass darkly, there face to face. Here we know in part, there we shall know even as we are known. Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

In the most perfect agreement with the intellectual, spiritual, and holy nature of the Gospel dispensation,

3. The ordinance of baptism was originally administered on a personal profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It unites men with the Gospel system, it is an evidence of the new birth, and a special blessing of the covenant of grace.

Baptism, agreeably to the Divine commission, the practice of the apostles, and the very nature of the Gospel dispensation, like the Lord's Supper, is not a commencement, but a result; not a cause, but an effect; not a matter of human imposition and compulsion, but of choice and desire. It was administered not in respect of persons or connections, but solely of character. The commission which is the authority by which baptism is administered, enjoins first to teach, or preach the Gospel, it next requires faith, and then baptism. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved."

The apostles in their ministry testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And till these appeared, they never enjoined baptism. If baptism was required by those who heard them, the answer was, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." When they inform us

of the baptism of the Corinthian converts, it is said, “ Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized.”* And when the Colossians are reminded of their baptism, it is in these words: “ Buried with him in baptism, wherein ye are also risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”†

The apostles contemplated men only in their relation to God, to his law, and his Gospel. They paid no respect either to their connections or circumstances, but attended solely to their moral state and character. They knew no man after the flesh. Regeneration, repentance, and faith, lay at the very basis of their whole system, and pervaded all its parts. They knew no man as a Christian, but as he was born of God. They sanctioned no Christianity, but as it was the result of faith in the Son of God. They administered no rites, but to such as gave evidence of their repentance to life and salvation.

The religion of the New Testament is evidently an affair wholly between God and the individual. It admits of no substitute. It is entirely personal, and uniformly proceeds on the principle that every one must give an account of himself to God. In the kingdom of Christ every thing is vital. Men might with as much propriety engage to perform for each other the various functions of life, as to be relatively religious. “ The axe is now laid to the root of the tree, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire, whilst every tree that bringeth forth fruit is purged, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Thus those who profess to introduce such members into the church of Christ as are not moral and voluntary agents, attempt that which, from the very nature of the Gospel dispensation, is impossible.

All real disciples first give their ownselves unto the Lord, and then unto his church, according to the will of God

* Acts xviii. 8.

† Col. ii. 12.

THE

CONCLUSION.

The following particulars present a summary of that for which the Baptists contend, with respect to the subjects of Christian Baptism.

1. That the retrograde manner in which our brethren endeavour to support the cause of Infant baptism, by seeking for analogies and sources of inference in an inferior and obsolete economy, is very questionable in itself, and highly derogatory to the perfection and glory of the Gospel dispensation; and, that those analogies and inferences which are truly legitimate in the support of any one ordinance of the Gospel, will accord with the genius of the dispensation, and with all its other institutions, as well as with its intimate relation to the future state.

2. That the commission of our Lord Jesus Christ is the sole rightful authority for the ordinance of baptism, and that the statements on this subject in the New Testament are the only certain directory for its administration.

3. That in our Lord's commission, and in the practice of the apostles, there is the most indisputable authority and direction to baptize on a personal profession of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. That the Gospel dispensation, or kingdom of God, being a moral administration, is suited only to moral agents,

—that it is proposed to the inhabitants of the whole world, without exception or distinction,—that discipleship commences in personal conviction and choice, and cannot be evinced but by repentance, faith, love, and obedience.

5. That a personal profession of faith is both a necessary and scriptural pre-requisite to admission to either baptism or the Lord's Supper, which ordinances are outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace.

6. That the notion of a privileged order of infants in relation to the Divine favour, constituted either by natural descent, or the administration of a rite, is as contrary to the genius of the Gospel dispensation, and to the express declarations of the New Testament, as it is opposed to the most natural and grateful conclusions drawn from the known perfections and gracious dispensations of our merciful God ; which give us the *most pleasing* confidence that all dying infants without exception are saved.

7. That the principles insisted upon by us, in relation to the subjects of baptism, have nothing in them peculiar, distinct, or uncommon ; but they are the very principles on which all our Christian brethren act on every religious subject, except infant baptism—That in taking our common principles to the baptistery, we neither differ from ourselves in any respect, nor from them in general ; but they in renouncing at the font our common sentiments, really differ as much from themselves as they do from us—And that it is for the Pædobaptists, not the Baptists, to account for singularity of sentiment ; the principles of infant baptism being the solitary exception to the otherwise general and common rule.

8. That in the practice and support of infant baptism, our brethren evidently sacrifice at the shrine of a very contracted and uncharitable Jewish prejudice, not only what we deem the principles of the Gospel, but also those which they themselves esteem and insist upon as most interesting and important, on all other religious occasions. We and

they unanimously caution men against all creature dependence, and testify to the Jew and also to the Greek, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. The Baptists bear their common testimony at the font, but there, when baptizing babes, our brethren drop it; and in direct opposition to the injunction of the Gospel, they teach men to “say within themselves, we have Abraham to our father.”

9. That Pædobaptism reduces the Christian profession far below every other science, profession, art, or calling. In all other engagements that belong to intelligent creatures, intellectual capacity is considered essential to an initiation even into its very rudiments. But, according to infant baptism, a commencement may be made in the most sublime science, the noblest profession, and the highest calling of which our nature is capable, without a capacity to exercise our intellectual faculties in the lowest degree.

10. And that it is as difficult to reconcile the practice of infant baptism with the principles of human nature, as with the dictates of the Word of God.

Now if the Baptists are erroneous on this subject, it is not through a want of charity towards infants. From all they know of God, they are fully and most cordially persuaded of the blessedness of all dying babes. They esteem our Lord Jesus Christ as the alone, and all-sufficient federal head in the covenant of grace, and believe that the immortal blessings of this covenant are communicated to men, of all nations, uniformly on the same principles.

They consider the Gospel to be addressed solely to *moral agents*; and if they err, it is by insisting on the new birth in opposition to the administration of a rite, or to relative holiness, as constituting the line of demarcation between the world and the church. It is by esteeming the ministry of the Gospel as the instrument of conversion, and personal religion as its sole evidence. If we are wrong, it is by insisting that faith in Christ is essential to the Christian

character, and necessary to *evangelical* and acceptable obedience,—and that the whole Christian religion is a personal, a voluntary, and a reasonable service.

To meet us fairly and to purpose, our brethren should maintain, that our Lord's kingdom is but partially a moral government,—that he does not require the affections, confidence, and obedience of all his subjects,—that Abraham was formerly the federal head in the covenant of grace, and that this dignity is now become the inheritance of every Gentile believer—that there is a privileged order amongst dying babes—that religion, in one instance at least, is not a personal concern—that it does not commence in the new birth—that it can be evinced without repentance, faith, hope and charity—that it requires neither the instrumentality of the word of God, as the means, nor the exercise of the understanding, the conscience, the will, or affections in the subject.

In this controversy, and on this point, the question has its bearing on the very nature and genius of the religion of Christ. It is the very essence of religion which constitutes the ground on which our brethren are at issue, both with themselves and with us; and until they prove that our Lord has established two kinds of religion—the one *relative*, which they insist on at the baptism of infants, the other *personal*, which with us, they maintain in all other religious ordinances—the one proceeding from man, the other the work of God—the one evinced by the graces of the Holy Spirit, the other existing without evidence—the subjects of the one, moral and accountable agents, of the other, babes incapable of responsibility—the character of the one being in conformity to the revealed will of God, and the other so entirely destitute of all character as to be perfect neutrality—until this be done, they have really effected nothing. In their general system and principles they allow and enforce all that for which we plead in the subjects of baptism, and they have not a single support for the baptism of babes,

unless they can prove the validity of a privileged order of children dying in infancy, and that the relative and neutral religion which is avowed and so fully implied in infant baptism is another religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the case is this, our brethren profess two distinct religions; a relative and neutral religion at the font, when baptizing infants; and a religion that is intelligent, active, and spiritual, at every other place, and on all other subjects.

Their relative and neutral religion is confined to mere infancy, and to the single act of baptism. It is of no experimental, rational, or practical use whatever. As soon as children become moral agents, our brethren dismiss their neutral religion, and unite with us in employing the ministry of the word, and in insisting on the new birth, with repentance and faith as its evidence, as essential to Christian character and blessedness. Notwithstanding all their zeal for the covenant relation between believing parents and their children, our Independent brethren will not, they conscientiously cannot, admit any person to communion in their churches on their principles of infant baptism. The moral and spiritual evidence of personal religion, is to the full as indispensable with them as it is with us, to *church fellowship*, and as an absolute prerequisite to a participation of the eucharist. We are compelled from their own practice to conclude, that if the connection between the parent and child be of any benefit, it must be in another world, for in this they themselves make it of no avail whatever. Upon their own principles and conduct, our children, in the present state, stand on such equal ground with theirs, that it might prove a question of no small degree of perplexity were we to ask our brethren, "Where then is the blessedness you talk so much of?"

Thus we walk in fellowship with our Poedobaptist brethren in preaching the word, in calling men to repentance and faith, in persuading by the terrors of the

Lord, and inviting by the mercies of God—in encouraging penitents—in baptizing believers—in teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded,—and in looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. But when our companions retrograde, and enter upon infant baptism, we demur. It is entirely separate ground. There are different subjects to be attended to—different reasons to be adduced—a different instrumentality to be employed—a distinct authority to be produced—and no fruit or evidence whatever to be seen. The whole of the way which we tread is established, not only by the New Testament, but also by the sentiments and practice of our Pœdobaptist brethren themselves. In this authorized road we continue, and determine, through Divine grace, to persevere unto the end. Though it is far from us to judge our brethren, and truly painful to differ from them in any instance or degree; yet, when they make their occasional excursions into the very dubious and sterile regions of either ritual efficacy, or relative holiness, we fear to follow them, lest we should offend Him, whose we are, and whom we serve, by walking in paths which he himself hath not appointed, and will not approve.

Fully satisfied with the wisdom of our merciful God, in reserving to himself the state of all who die in infancy, we respect the silence of his word, and dare not form an unauthorized privileged order of children, which by implication casts so awful a gloom over the dispensations of Him who is the Lord God, merciful and gracious.

Believing that it is to rational beings only that God has revealed his word—that it is exclusively to voluntary and accountable creatures he has prescribed, and with solemn sanctions, enforced his will—we have not the least hesitation in rejecting the relative and neutral religion of our brethren, as neither appointed nor ap-

proved of God, nor in the least degree profitable to men. But though, in this one point, we are obliged so decisively to differ, yet, in all their sentiments of personal, spiritual, experimental, and practical religion, we most cordially unite with our highly esteemed brethren; determined by the grace of God, both in our doctrine and lives, to exemplify the apostolic saying, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

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