

THE
SUBSTANCE
OF SOME
DISCOURSES ON BAPTISM;

DELIVERED IN THE

Reformed Presbyterian Church, in Pittsburgh.

By JOHN BLACK, D. D.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONGREGATION.

PITTSBURGH:
PRINTED BY J. M'MILLIN, COMMERCIAL JOURNAL JOB OFFICE.
1846.

DISCOURSE.

“ Then Peter said unto them. Repent, and be baptized every one of yon in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Acts ii. 38, 39.

THE feast of Pentecost was one of the three solemn feasts, in which all the males in Israel were commanded to appear before the Lord, in the course of the year, in the place which he should choose. Deut. xvi. 16. It is also called the feast of weeks, because forty-nine days, or a week of weeks, must be complete after the passover, and on the fiftieth day it was celebrated; hence called Pentecost, or the fiftieth day. It was also called the feast of harvest, because, at that time, the wheat harvest was ripe, and the first fruits were to be offered to the Lord. The object appears to have been, to render thanks to God for his mercies, and to commemorate the giving of the law from Mount Sinai. Did it not also prefigure the descent of the Holy Ghost in such plentiful effusion upon the disciples of Christ on the day of Pentecost, and how plentifully the first fruits of the Gentiles should give themselves unto the Lord? It is worthy of observation, that it was on the day of Pentecost—the fiftieth day from the Israelites’ departure from Egypt—that God gave the law from Sinai, and on that very day—the day of Pentecost, he caused the gospel law to be promulgated.

The Savior, before he ascended, commanded his apostles to remain at Jerusalem, until they should obtain the promise of the Father, and be baptized with the Holy Ghost; for which, he assured them, they would not have to

wait many days. This promise was fulfilled ten days after his departure. Then was displayed a remarkable manifestation of the divine power. A sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, is suddenly heard, which filled the whole house where the disciples were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, one of which sat down upon the head of each of them—an emblem of the diversified languages which they were now to speak. At the building of Babel, the language of the people was confounded and divided, and thereby the builders were scattered; but here the gift of various languages was given, that the scattered nations might be gathered to Jesus Christ, the shepherd and bishop of souls.

The solemn occasion had gathered to Jerusalem strangers in multitudes, who, it appears, spoke fifteen different languages, all of which the disciples now perfectly understood, and distinctly and fluently spoke, as if they had been their mother tongue, although they had never learned them. This filled all with amazement; but some mocked, and ridiculed the whole transaction, ascribing it to inebriation. The apostles resented this invidious reproach, and Peter, who was the chief speaker, shewed plainly, that this was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, ii. 28—31, and preached unto them Jesus whom they had crucified, in such a powerful, moving, and effectual manner, the Holy Spirit setting it home upon their hearts, that they said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? To which Peter answered, “ Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

In considering these words, we propose the following method:

1. Offer some remarks on the nature of baptism. 2. Inquire who are its proper subjects? 3. The Scripture mode of baptism.

I. The nature of baptism.

1. Baptism is a washing with water as a sacramental act. It had been long in use by the Jews in receiving their proselytes, but not by divine institution. Baptism supposes impurity in the subject. Indeed, all washing necessarily supposes this. That which is clean may be wet, but cannot properly be washed. But baptism is called *washing*. Eph. v. 26, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” The symbol is water only. It represents the blood of Christ applied by the Holy Spirit, Rev. i. 5: “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” The application of that blood is by the Spirit of Christ, Titus iii. 5: “According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” The blood of Christ cleanses meritoriously, 1 John i. 7: “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” The Spirit of Christ cleanseth us from all sin, by the efficacious application of the blood of Christ to the conscience. By the blood of Christ the guilt of sin is, at once, taken away in justification. The Spirit of Christ removes the blot and stain of sin gradually in sanctification. As water, free to all by the gift of heaven, when applied, washes and makes clean that which before was physically foul and unclean; so the blood of Christ, freely offered to all who hear the gospel, when applied by the Spirit, purifies from the guilt and pollution of sin, those who are morally defiled, and spiritually unclean. The instrumental administrators of baptism must be ministers of the gospel lawfully ordained, and no others. None have a right to act as commissioners, but such as have received a commission. The

steward of a family is appointed by the head of the family. Jesus Christ, who alone is Lord in his own house, made all its laws, appointed all its offices and officers, and commissioned those whom he authorized to preach and baptize. Before he ascended into heaven, he enlarged the commission of his apostles, which before his death had been restricted to the Jews; but now he authorizes them to go into all nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, and convert them to the faith of Christ, and promises to be with them always, even to the end of the world. The apostles were not to live to the end of the world. It could not, therefore, mean the apostles personally. Yet he says *you*. It must therefore mean the officers, and that too, without the possibility of suffering the office to die, or the officers to become extinct to the end of time. The limit is the *end* of the world—the intermediate time, *always*. There never shall be an interregnum, or the office without an occupant, while the world stands. The apostles, as such, had no successors. The office, like that of the prophets, was altogether extraordinary. The claims of the Pope, and the no less groundless claims of diocesan bishops, to be the successors of the apostles, spring from ignorance of the gospel, and the government of the Church of God, as established by the Redeemer. The apostles possessed the ministerial, as well as the apostolical character; the ordinary office of the ministry, along with the apostolate. This is evident from the declaration of Peter in his 1st Epistle, v. 1: “The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder”—presbyter, or minister of the gospel. Now, to such characters, Christ gave the commission to preach and baptize. How daring, then, must it be for any who have not this commission, to undertake to preach and baptize. In 1 Cor. iv. 1, the ministers of Christ are called “stewards of the mysteries of God.” Are stewards self-appointed?

Or may they who are not appointed, act the part of stewards, as well as those who are? Since the extraordinary granting of commissions, in the days of the apostles, has ceased, the Scripture speaks of no way by which a commission is given, but by “the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” 1 Tim. iv. 14. As a blessing was prayed for by our Lord, to attend the administration of the sacramental supper, so, by parity of reason, a blessing is to be prayed for, to attend the administration of the sacrament of baptism. This prayer sets apart the “sensible sign” in the sacrament, from a common to a sacred use. The water in baptism should, in this way, be blessed, as the bread and wine in the Lord’s supper, by praying for a blessing thereon.

2. Baptism is to be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to whom the baptized person is dedicated as covenant property. But as to immediate authority, like all other Church ordinances, it is administered in the name of Jesus Christ. Many mistakes have been made about baptizing in the name of Christ, and baptizing in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as if they were different modes of baptizing. The truth is, both apply to every baptism. The mistake is in applying the same meaning to the word *name*, in both cases. Sometimes the word *name* means authority; thus a civil Court is opened in the *name*, that is, by the authority of the Commonwealth; and an ecclesiastical Court is opened in the *name*, by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, *name* sometimes means property, or possession; thus a deed is made out in the name, or for the use, and as the property of some one. In the first sense, no ordinance is administered in the name of the Trinity. No ecclesiastical Court is opened in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. True it is, that all power, and

authority originally belong to God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; but there is, by the God-head, a delegated authority and headship committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, that the preaching of the gospel, the administration of sacraments, and all church ordinances, shall be done in his name, and by virtue of his authority. Thus all who are baptized, are baptized in the name of Jesus. They are also baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, solemnly dedicated, and devoted, to be the covenant property of a three one God, to be for him soul and body, wholly and forever. Their engagement is to be the Lord's and to take him as their portion forever.

3. Teaching must precede and accompany baptism. If the persons to be baptized were heathens, they must first be proselyted, and instructed in the faith. Mat. xxviii. 19: and all adults should be so indoctrinated, and instructed in the knowledge of Christ, and of the system of grace, that they shall be able to give a reason of the hope that is in them. It is the doctrine of Anti-Christ, that ignorance is the mother of devotion, while the Bible plainly declares, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hos. iv. 6. An ignorant man is represented as more stupid than the ox, or the ass. Is. i. 3: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Unless the person be previously instructed, he cannot have a firm persuasion that it is an ordinance of God. He cannot have a serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the end for which Christ instituted it. Every sacrament must be received by faith. But faith supposes knowledge. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. x. 14.

Rev. John Black, "Discourses on Baptism" (Pittsburgh: J. M'Millan, 1846).

4. As baptism is an enrolment of a new member of the church—an initiating into the visible society of the worshippers of the Lord Jesus Christ, it ought to be done publicly, in the face of the congregation. It is a declaration of visible membership, a distinguishing badge of discipleship, a sign whereby the followers of Christ are distinguished from pagans, or heathens, as the Israelites of old were distinguished from the uncircumcised nations around them. Private baptism is therefore contrary to the nature of the ordinance, a mean, and clandestine intruding of members into visible communion, as if by stealth. There is something in the very nature of the ordinance, that requires its public administration. The body of Christ is one, and the members of that body are also, “members, one of another.” Rom. xii. 5. And the apostle says, 1 Cor. xii. 13: “By one spirit are we all baptized into one body.” Baptism, therefore, presents to the body, another member initiated into their fellowship, and having a claim upon their prayers, their brotherly affection, their sympathy, and all good offices. Besides, the solemn ordinance, the vows and engagements of the person baptized, while calling for the accompanying prayers of the congregation, will also remind them of their own vows and engagements, and thereby excite to the improving their own baptism, and thus promoting their sanctification. Baptism, while in a certain sense, it is an initiating ordinance, yet does not originate *the fact of* church membership. Baptism supposes church membership, and yet it confers a membership which the unbaptized member did not enjoy. The fact of membership abstractly, is obtained, by making a profession of the faith of the gospel, or by being the infant seed of church members. This entitles to being recognized as a member of the organized visible church, to which the person is initiated by baptism. If attention is paid to the

distinction between the kind of membership which is required to entitle to baptism, and the membership which baptism confers, it will refute the charge which is sometimes brought, of arguing in a circle, making membership the cause of baptism, and baptism the cause of membership. The distinction is obvious.

5. Baptism is not only a sign of church membership, as well as of Christ and his benefits; it is also a seal of the covenant of grace. A seal is used as a confirmation of bonds or deeds. Such was circumcision in the covenant made with Abraham, a “seal of the righteousness of faith.” Rom. iv. 11; and such is the seal of baptism, which comes in the room of circumcision, to all **believers**, who are the spiritual seed of Abraham. By this seal Christ and his benefits are confirmed to the believer. These benefits are all the blessings contained in the promises of the new covenant, all embraced in grace here, and glory hereafter; Ps. lxxxiv. 11: “For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory.” A seal to a deed, covenant, or agreement, supposes the agreement made, the seal is a ratification of what the parties have agreed upon. A seal would be of no use without this agreement. None are agreed to God’s covenant but believers. I speak now of adults. Therefore, baptism seals nothing to any but believers. God promises every blessing to believers, and baptism is a seal of the covenant on God’s part, not to make the promise of the covenant more sure, for it is impossible for God to lie, his faithfulness is inviolable, and unchangeable; but to make the faith of the believer stronger. It is God’s ratifying to believers their right to covenant blessings with infallible certainty. And thus God, for the strengthening the faith, and removing the doubts of believers, condescends to bind himself in the most solemn manner, by bond and seal. Like as in Heb. vi. 18, where

accommodating himself to the weakness of his people, he seals his promise with the solemnity of an oath. The blessings that are sealed to believers in baptism, are “remission of sins by the blood of Christ, regeneration by his spirit, adoption, and resurrection to everlasting life.” In baptism there is, as in every sacrament, an engagement to be the Lord’s—a renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and an engagement to devote all that we are, soul and body, and all that we have, our gifts, graces, time, talents, comforts and joys, to the glory of God. And this requires, to “deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” In baptism the believer “sets to his seal that God is true,” John iii. 33, by believing his promises, receiving his testimony, and taking his law in the hand of the Mediator, as the rule of his faith, and obedience in all things. Adults in baptism, take these vows directly, and in their own persons. Children impliedly, through the representation of their parents. Parents are the natural guardians of their children. They are the most suitable persons to be their moral guardians, and representatives. Children are bound by the act of their representatives in civil things, and why not in the vows of baptism, if these vows are right—what the law of God requires? None can be bound by what is morally wrong, for all obligation is founded in the moral law, and what it forbids, can have in it no obligation—nothing binding on the conscience. Parents, in the baptism of their children, do not promise what their children will do, but what they themselves will do, in the discharge of the duties incumbent upon them, as Christian parents to their Christian offspring. Through their representation, the child receives the sacrament of baptism, and in that sacrament is contained the engagement to be the Lord’s, which, as we have seen, binds to all the duties which God’s law makes

incumbent as a rule of life, to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors or equals.

II. The subjects of baptism—believing adults, and the infants of believers.

1. Believing adults, that is, those professing to believe the system of grace, having a competent portion of knowledge, and a life and conversation becoming the gospel. In this pedobaptists and antipedobaptists are both agreed. The command of the Redeemer, to baptize all who are converted to the faith of the gospel, Mat. xxviii. 19, puts the matter beyond dispute, in relation to adults, but says nothing at all in regard to infants. And yet, strange as it may appear, and inconclusive as it certainly is, Baptists make it an argument against infant baptism. Let us examine it a little. Because Christ commanded to baptize adults, therefore he forbade the baptizing of infants. The one does not follow from the other. Suppose it to be the reverse. Christ commanded infants to be baptized, therefore, he prohibited the baptism of adults. Who does not see that this would be inconclusive? Try it with something similar. Christ commanded children to be fed and clothed, therefore, he forbade adults to be fed and clothed. There is certainly no argument here in favor of infant baptism, and there is just as little against it. It proves nothing either way.

2. The infants of church members are to be baptized. We argue this from the words of the text: "*The promise is to you and to your children.*" The promise here is the foundation or reason why believing and repenting parents should be baptized, but the same promise is given to their children. If then the promise to the parents was a reason for their being baptized, the same promise given to the children would equally be a reason why they also should be baptized. "*For,*" which means *because*, shewing the

reason, is, in the same manner, applied to the children as to their parents. It may be of importance to inquire, to what promise does the apostle allude? Some think, to the promise quoted from Joel, but this seems too confined, and peculiar to the extraordinary effusion of the spirit on the day of Pentecost. Besides, the words quoted by the apostle, are not found in the prophecy of Joel. But they are found in the promise made to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." As very different conclusions will result, from the different views that are taken of the Abrahamic covenant, it may not be unsuitable to the subject under consideration, to examine it a little. Some view the whole transaction as local, and as having respect to Abraham and his family alone, and its promises terminating in the possession of Canaan—the promised land, and of this, circumcision was a sign and seal—a mark of carnal descent, and of national distinction. Others maintain that there were two covenants made with Abraham, one spiritual and internal, and another worldly and external pertaining to the land of Canaan. All this proceeds upon mistaken views. Many things assumed in these speculative notions are false.

Since the breach of the covenant of works, God has been pleased to deal with men, in the way of grace, and mercy. "By the fall the life of the soul and the life of the body were laid under forfeiture; so also was the right to all means conducive to both." A new covenant was revealed. A Savior was provided. A dispensation of grace commenced with the first promise. The Mediator's death removed the forfeiture, in relation to all whom he represented. He restored what he took not away. All his children inherit all blessings for soul and body, by right of his redemption.

Every dispensation of God to his people, is a dispensation of the covenant of grace. These dispensations were, at first, covered with much obscurity. They progressed, however, with increasing clearness. The promise to Adam, was a revelation of grace, more obscure, than that which was afterwards made to Noah. The covenant made with Abraham was still clearer. And the same advancing clearness is observable in God's dealings with Abraham himself. In Gen. xii. 1—3, God makes a dispensation of his covenant of grace to him by promise. The covenant of grace is a covenant of promise. "I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." In chap. xiii. 14—17; the same promise is again made with considerable enlargement. In chap. xv. 18; the covenant is renewed to Abraham, with still more minute specifications. The land of Canaan is marked to its utmost boundaries. In chap. xvii. 1—8, the covenant is again renewed, with great enlargements. No new blessing could, in the nature of the thing, be added to the promises; chap. xii. 23. All that is contained in God's covenant, is embraced in the promises recorded there, made by God to Abraham. By the renovation, and enlargement, more specifications of blessings suited to the exigency of the case, may be made, or new light may be thrown on what was not so plain, and clear before. We find then no two covenants here, one of which would be carnal, and the other spiritual. But this one covenant embraces all temporal and spiritual blessings. Indeed the spiritual blessings far exceed the temporal. "As for me," said God to Abraham, "behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. The Hebrew nation was but one, with which Abraham, whose original name was Abram, signifying a high father,

was immediately connected. But now, God was about to make him a representative of Gentile nations also, who, in future times, were to be converted to the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In reference to this fact, his name is changed to Abraham, signifying a high father of many nations. The change of his name is restricted to this. And the promise is the same, as in Gen. xii. 3: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." And that this promise is spiritual, and looks forward to gospel times, is evident from the apostle's application of it to Abraham's believing seed of all nations; Gal. iii. 7: "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." And to show that this is equally applicable to the Gentiles, as to the Jews, they are particularly specified, verse 14: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." And again in verse 29: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Is this then a mere carnal, or temporal covenant, which was made with Abraham respecting the land of Canaan? Certainly not. It was a dispensation of the covenant of grace. The Abrahamic covenant, in its principles and essence, is still the same, and the church formed upon it, is the same church into which the Gentiles are brought under the gospel. "The church under one dispensation is never represented as a figure of the church under another." "My beloved is but one." She is the same moral person under all dispensations. The covenant of grace is one. And when God is represented in scripture, as making a covenant with any, it is the covenant of grace. Not meaning the covenant as made between the Father and the Son in eternity, but as a dispensation or revelation of that covenant. Such was the dispensation of the covenant to Abraham, which extends and looks forward to New

Testament times, and all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are called the children of Abraham, as he is denominated the father of the faithful. Gal. iii. 29. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Rom. iv. 11. "That he might be the father of all them that believe."

Now this covenant, which we have seen is substantially the same in both the old and new Testament dispensations, embraced infants in the same membership with their parent. The promise is alike to both; and, of course, the sign, seal of recognition, as members of the visible church, must be the same. The promise to Abraham, and his seed, required **circumcision** to both. And the same promise to believers and their seed, requires, equally, baptism to both. Such is the command of the apostle, "Repent and be baptized—for the promise is to you, and to your children." Children here must be distinguished from those who can be addressed by the word *you*. They must therefore be infants, such as are incapable of being reasoned with, otherwise they would be included in the word "you." Parents are not the representatives of their children after they come of age, but only as infants or minors. This would seem to settle the membership of infants, under both dispensations.

3. The covenant promise to Abraham was ratified by circumcision. In Gen. xvii. 10—14, we find that Abraham was commanded to be circumcised, together with all that were in his house, and this in connection with the covenant which God had made with him. God said to him, "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; Every man-child among you shall be circumcised; and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." Circumcision is

here called “the covenant,” because it was a sacramental *sign* or *token* of the covenant, as the paschal lamb is called *the passover*, or the cup in the Lord’s supper, the *New Testament*. It was also a *seal*. Rom. iv. 11. “And he received the sign of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.” What in Genesis is called a *token*, is by the apostle called a *seal*. they are of the same import—signifying a ratification of a promise, as the bow in the cloud was a ratification of God’s promise to Noah—a security that the covenant should never be broken. The promise that was sealed by circumcision was this, that God would be a God to Abraham and to his seed. Did this mean no more than the promise of Canaan? and was circumcision no more than a “mere carnal rite, and a mark of carnal descent?” Far from it. All blessings, both temporal and spiritual, are embodied in it. The covenant was a dispensation of the covenant of grace, and circumcision a seal of that covenant. Indeed, far from circumcision being a token of a title to Canaan, some of Abraham’s seed who had the token in their flesh, were excluded from any inheritance there. Such were Ishmael and Esau, and their descendants. And all the Jews to this day have the token, but where is their title to Palestine? and if the covenant, and the rite of circumcision, secured the title, as it certainly did to what it sealed, why are they now not inheriting it? Nor was circumcision, “a mark of carnal descent.” It did not prove that all, or any who possessed it, were descended from Abraham. At the time of its institution, compared with Abraham’s seed, there were more than three hundred to one, that were not descended from him, and yet all had the same token. It was not then a “token of carnal descent.” Abraham had no child but Ishmael, while his trained servants were three hundred and eighteen, with their male

children, all strangers, and all enjoyed the same token. It is worthy of observation, that though circumcision is called a seal of the righteousness of faith” to Abraham, yet his faith did not constitute it a seal, but only received it as a seal. It was a seal independent of his faith. In this way it becomes a seal to a family. God’s instituting it made it a seal, not only to an individual, as the head of a family, but to his household. It had, therefore, the same meaning to all his family, whether they believed or not. In as far as external privileges were concerned, it sealed church membership to the whole family, from the infant of days, to the head of the house. All the household, whether males or females, had an interest in circumcision; the males by actual application, and the females by the representation of the head of the family. It did not, therefore, require faith in the infants. It was to them the seal of the covenant without it. Indeed the covenant promise, Acts ii. 38, 39, is, even to the parents, the ground and encouragement to believe, to repent, and to be baptized, God graciously offering to be their God, and the God of their seed, the same as he had promised to Abraham. This promise implies a spiritual visible church relation to God. It is the same covenant which was made with Abraham, and is made with the church under the Christian dispensation. This is proved both by prophecy, and the application of the prophecy by the Apostle.

In Jer. xxxi. 31—33, the prophecy in relation to New Testament times, of the covenant that God would make with his church, called by the name of Israel, is expressed in the very words of the covenant made with Abraham, “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” And thus the Apostle applies them, Heb. viii. 10. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my

laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” The covenant at Sinai, which was of a peculiar nature, had been abolished, but not so the Abrahamic covenant. For the Apostle informs us, Gal. iii. 17, “That the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.”

This covenant which was made with a view to Christ, confirmed by his blood, and ratified by God in him, revealed to Abraham, and confirmed by God’s own word of promise, and the seal of circumcision, could not be invalidated by the law of Moses, or be disannulled, when that dispensation came to an end, and so its seal, suited to the new, and more spiritual dispensation of it, namely, a spiritual circumcision, must remain, and this is found in baptism. This is confirmed by the Apostle calling baptism by the very name of circumcision, Col. ii. 11. “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” This will establish two things, both that the covenant is the same, and that baptism comes in the room of circumcision, as being the same seal in another form, suited to the new dispensation of the covenant. The Jews set a high value upon circumcision, and well they might, when taken in connection with the blessings of which it was a seal. The Apostle acknowledges this, Rom. iii. 1, 2. “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way.” The Jewish zealots therefore, urged upon the Christian converts the necessity of circumcision still, otherwise, they would be deprived of a distinguishing privilege and blessing. The Apostle answers this, and removes the objection: as saying to them, “You have lost nothing in

Christ you are so complete, as to have no need of the ordinance of circumcision, for ye have a better circumcision of the heart—a spiritual circumcision, which is not effected, like that in the flesh, by the work of human hands, but by the renewing operation of the Spirit, of which, as circumcision formerly was, so now Christian circumcision, that is baptism, is the sign. In no other sense can the “baptism of Christ” be understood here. Certainly not his own circumcision in the flesh on the eighth day: for that, as much as any other, was made by the hands of men. “The circumcision of Christ,” is also distinguished from “the circumcision made without hands,” namely, the renewing of the Holy Ghost. *Of Christ* then is the same as *Christian*, and Christian circumcision is baptism, and thus it is explained in the following words, verse 12, “Buried with him in baptism.” The same thing is represented by baptism that was represented by circumcision. Both represent the blood of Christ by different symbols suited to the different dispensations. In circumcision, blood was to be shed, for Christ had not yet shed his blood. Now that he has shed his blood, that symbol is no longer necessary. Water, pointing out the cleansing virtue of that blood which has been shed, is a more suitable emblem. The same may be said of the other sacrament, the passover, succeeded by the Lord’s supper. It is true, the symbol of wine, and not water is used in this sacrament, because washing is not its object, but nourishing and comforting those who are washed. Circumcision was a religious institute, a seal of spiritual blessings. So is baptism. Circumcision was a sign of the renovation of the heart, and of the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. The water in baptism is equally a sign of regeneration, and newness of life. Both institutions are equally prefaced with the same promise, as that on which they are

founded, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed." And "as circumcision was a pledge to the Jews, by which they were assured of their adoption as the people and family of God, and on their parts professed their entire subjection to him, and therefore was their first entrance into the church: so now we are initiated into the church of God by baptism, are numbered among his people, and profess to devote ourselves to his service."

We have, then, found that the covenant under the New Testament is the same as that under the Old. that the seal of the covenant is the same, differing only in form—that the infants of believers under the Old Testament dispensation were members of the church, and entitled to the seal of recognition, by which they were recognized, or publicly initiated into the visible membership of the church. How, then, is their membership destroyed? It becomes those who deny the membership of the infants of believers, and their right to the seal of the covenant to be taken away, to offer proof of this destruction of membership, and divestment of the seal of the covenant.

We have dwelt the longer on this subject, because we believe the point in debate turns entirely upon it. If the Baptists can shew that the membership of infants has been set aside under the New Testament, they will carry their point; if not, it remains as before, and the infants of believers are as much entitled to baptism, as the seed of Abraham were entitled to circumcision. There is still more proof that the covenant made with Abraham is not annulled, and that the Old Testament, and New Testament church is the same, and consequently, that the blessings and privileges are the same. In Rom. xi. 16—24, we have a figurative description of the church in Old Testament times, under the metaphor of an olive tree. By the root of this tree is meant *Abraham*, and the visible church

of Israel as springing from him, and from the covenant made with him, is meant by *the good olive tree*. The allusion appears to be made to Jer. xi. 16: "The Lord called thy name, a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit." The natural branches are the descendants of Abraham by his son Isaac. For thus the promise ran, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." These owed their place, as branches, entirely to the promise. The olive tree was their church state. While the branches remained, they were nourished by the tree, and partook of its fatness. But of these natural branches, some were at length broken off, "because of unbelief;" others remained, namely, those Jews who believed in Jesus. Their believing did not make them another tree. Among these natural branches that remained, the Gentiles were ingrafted. No new church was formed. The church continued the same. The tree was not rooted out, and a new one planted. Now this church had infants as a part of its members, and no change has taken place since, and none will take place, for the tree must remain the same, that the Jews may be grafted in again into *their own olive tree*. But if infants were not members, it would not be their own olive tree. The initiating sign must also be, in substance, the same; yes, it must be the *Christian circumcision*, otherwise called baptism. "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again—How much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"

"It is, therefore, evident beyond all rational contradiction, that the same church existed in Abraham's family, among the Jews in their successive generations, that now exists both among Gentiles and Jews under the gospel."

In Eph. ii. 14, we have the same truth farther confirmed: "For he is our peace who hath made both one and hath

broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” Here we are informed that Christ hath broken down the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and having become the peace of both, hath made both one church. The Jews were already in possession of the house. They were the church of God. The partition wall had excluded the Gentiles: but Christ, by his death, broke down the wall, an emblem of which was exhibited at the moment of his death, when “the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom.” The removing the partition does not make a new house. And should the former occupants act so as to forfeit their right, and it be taken from them, and given to the others, the house would be still the same. To transfer any thing from one to another, implies that there is no change in the thing transferred, but only in the possessor. And this actually took place, as had been foretold by Christ himself to the Jews, Mat. viii. 11: “Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.” And again, Mat. xxi. 43: “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” And this was fulfilled, when the church state was taken from the Jews, and given to the Gentiles, Acts xiii. 46: “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” Thus the identity of the church is the same under both dispensations, and, therefore, the membership of infants the same under both.

The membership of infants being still continued under the New Testament dispensation, will further appear, from the fact, that children descended from even but one be-

believing parent, are called *clean* and *holy*, 1 Cor. vii. 14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." The meaning of *holy* and *clean*, or *unclean*, was well known to the Jews. Such terms were of common use in their law. They were themselves denominated a holy nation, not because they were really holy in heart before God, but because they were separated from the heathen world, and set apart to God as his professing people. And thus sometimes the word *saints* has the same meaning. Paul, in writing to the churches, calls them indiscriminately by the name of *saints*, or holy persons, because they were holy by profession, and dedicated to God, whether they were really sanctified in heart or not. No doubt many were not. All that are set apart for God as his professing people, are relatively holy. The holiness of these children must be of this description. They were by birth members of the church, notwithstanding the heathenism of one of their parents. It will not be plead by any, that the sanctity, or subjective holiness of parents, is transferable to their children; but here it is declared that the children are holy in consequence of the belief of one of the parents. It can be nothing but a relative holiness, a holiness in relation to the church, and its membership. Some have contended that it means legitimacy. This is a meaning which the word *holy* never has in the Bible, although it is often used there. Marriage is founded in the law of nature, and not in the system of grace. It is common to men, like magistracy, which is also founded in the law of nature. Neither of these is a church ordinance. The marriage of heathens is therefore valid, and their children equally legitimate, as the children of Christians. Indeed, to require faith in either of the parties to make marriage legitimate, is a near

approach to making it a sacrament, as we know some do. By a positive law under the Old Testament economy, Deut. vii. 5, the Israelites were prohibited from making any marriages with the heathen: and we learn from the conduct of Ezra the priest, in the execution of the law, chap x. 10—14, that such marriages, under that dispensation, were to be dissolved, and the strange wives and their children were to be sent away. The Corinthian converts seem to be in doubt whether this law was abrogated, or still in force. The apostle settles the matter, by shewing that Christianity does not dissolve the marriage relation, though formed in a state of heathenism, when one or both of the parties become Christians. The children, therefore, are “clean,” and “holy,”—are admissible as members of the church, through the believing parent, to the enjoyment of whatever privilege they are capable of receiving. But they are capable of being dedicated unto God, and therefore ought to be baptized.

It is sometimes suggested that if the faith of the believing party sanctified the children, so that they were entitled to baptism, it would also have sanctified the unbelieving party, and entitled them to baptism likewise. But this would not follow. The sanctifying the unbelieving party is not personally to themselves, but relatively to the children. “By a grant of the gracious God, children are taken relatively into the same covenant with their believing parents; but there is no such grant as admits an unbelieving husband to any church privilege because his correlate is a believer: for the gospel makes the same offer to him whether she is a believer or not.” The promise is to the believer and to his seed, but not to his wife, in the same manner, because as an adult the offer is made to herself. The adult parent professing faith in the promise made to Abraham, becomes visibly and relatively holy; and as the

same promise comprehends his infant seed, they are equally holy with himself.

Still further the membership of infants is recognized by Christ himself, Mark x. 14. "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." It is asked, does this prove baptism? or did he baptize them? No. It does not directly prove baptism, but it proves membership, and the members are to be baptized. "The kingdom of God," means the visible church, Mat. xxi. 43. "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Or view it as the kingdom of glory, if they are heirs of it, surely they are fit for being members of the church on earth. To the same purpose, Mark ix. 36, 37, "He took a child in his arms—and said, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name receiveth me." Some say, it does not mean little infants, but persons of a child like disposition, and that they belong to the kingdom of God. This would destroy the force of Christ's reasoning, and render it inconclusive. Suffer these children to come unto me, because other persons are like them, is reasoning that requires no refutation. Such reasoning Christ could not have used. The parents brought them to Christ to obtain his blessing upon them. They were believing Jews. They were members of Christ's church, and he recognizes the membership of their children. In the same manner the Apostle recognizes the membership of his family, when the head of the house is a believer, Acts xi. 14. "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved?" And chap. xvi. 15, "And when she was baptized, and her household"—verse 31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Jesus Christ did not baptize the infants whom *he took in his*

arms and blessed, for he baptized none with his own hand, John iv. 2. “Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.” Besides, the Old Testament dispensation was still in force, and circumcision was not yet displaced by baptism. Not the coming of Christ in the flesh, but his death, terminated the Old, and introduced the New Testament dispensation.

Let us look at the commission given to the Apostles, and through them to the ministers of Christ to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 19. “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” It is granted that the word translated *teach*, signifies to proselyte, or to disciple, if we had such a verb, and its object is all nations, therein differing widely from the former dispensation, which confined the visible church to the Hebrew nation. Now all nations, Gentiles, as well as Jews, are to be converted to the faith of the Gospel, and to be baptized. There is not a hint of destroying the membership of the infants of these proselyted nations. If there had, surely, we would have heard of it. The Apostles were Jews. Those whom they first addressed were Jews. They all knew well, that their children had heretofore been members of the church, and their right of initiation had been, and still was their boast and even their pride. And is all gone in a moment, and not a word of complaint? What! the membership of the infants of God’s visible covenant society abrogated, annulled, repealed, how? where? We know nothing of it. The question is not about an institution of the membership of infants, for that they had already; but about the taking of it away. Here the Baptists have the affirmative side. We deny that ever it was taken away. We ask for proof that it was. It will not be found here. Nations are to be proselyted, and when proselyted, to be

baptized. Are not infants a part of nations? And do they require a special law to ascertain their membership? When the nation of Texas was received into membership, as a part of the Union, did it require a separate law to make their children members? or if no such law was made, are the children aliens, and not members? We think not. An attempt is made to get out of this difficulty, by a grammatical criticism. The Greek word for nations is in the neuter gender. *Them* after "baptizing," is in the masculine gender. To this it may be answered, the syntax here makes the relative refer to the sense, and not to the word as the antecedent. Nations is a collective term, but baptizing is an individual thing. Nations are not baptized collectively, but personally, or individually, and as persons are evidently alluded to, the masculine gender is used as the most worthy, comprehending, however, both males and females. The criticism would exclude females: for the masculine gender is not the feminine, any more than the neuter. But what is gained by the criticism? *Disciples* manufactured out of the verb, it is contended, is the true antecedent. Well, be it so. Infants are disciples, see Acts xv. 10. "Now, therefore, why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the *disciples*, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" It is evident that the "yoke" here means circumcision. Certain Judaizing teachers at Antioch, had urged upon the Gentile converts the absolute necessity of circumcision. This produced great dissensions and disputations. Paul and Barnabas were deputed to go up to Jerusalem, to consult the Apostles and elders there. But there, as well as at Antioch, Jewish converts who had been of the sect of the Pharisees, vehemently contended for the same thing. Peter reproves them, and asks, why they would attempt to put a yoke of bondage upon Gentile believers, and their seed, by

obliging them to be circumcised, who, under the gospel state, are to be considered as disciples, both parents and children, the same as under the Mosaic economy? The children of disciples, then, are reckoned to be disciples, as children are considered scholars as soon as they are sent to school, even before they have learned a letter. It is impious to assert that it is useless to administer baptism to an infant. With the same reason it might be said that it was useless to administer circumcision to an infant eight days old. Who does not see that this would be a reflection on God himself, for appointing it? It is equally improper to apply to infants what belongs only to adults, in order to make the thing appear absurd, such as, faith and repentance are required of those who are to be baptized, but infants cannot believe and repent, therefore infants ought not to be baptized. An argument of precisely the same kind, may be formed from 2 Thes. iii. 10. "If any would not work, neither should he eat." But infants will not work, because they cannot. Therefore they should not eat. Again, Mark, xvi. 16, "He that believeth not shall be damned." But infants do not believe, because they are incapable of it. Therefore infants must be damned. We do not charge Baptists with holding these conclusions, as their belief, but we maintain they are the natural, and necessary consequences of applying to infants what belongs only to adults. It is sometimes objected to infant baptism, that there is no direct command for it in the New Testament, and no example of the Apostles baptizing any infants. Neither is there any direct command for admitting women to the Lord's supper, nor any example of their being admitted. It is true, we have inferential evidence enough, and so have we for infant baptism, even more than for the other.

We have no instance of any adult being re-baptized who

had been baptized in infancy. We have more than one instance of the Apostle's baptizing households; Lydia and her household, Acts xvi. 14, 15. The jailor and his household, verse 33. The household of Stephanus, 1 Cor. i. 16. The head of the house is always mentioned, for it would seem that it was upon his faith that the household was baptized, a strong presumption, at least, that there were infants there. "And thy house" is appended to the act of believing by the head of the house, Acts xvi. 31. Nor is it likely that the whole three families which the Apostle baptized, had no infants in any of them.

But why should the membership of infants be set aside? What reason can be given, seeing it belonged neither to the judicial, nor the ceremonial law, but was instituted more than four hundred years before they were given. Why then should it be repealed? especially, in a dispensation, that enlarges the privileges of the church, but takes away none.

It has now been sufficiently shown that the infants of church members were, by God's appointment, once constituted members of the visible church, and we can find no trace of a repeal of that law in the New Testament, either by express precept, approved example, or necessary consequence. If their membership remains, they are disciples, and the disciples are to be baptized. Until Baptists can prove, that the law is repealed and that their membership is taken away, they have to begin their task. Giving directions to adults will not repeal it. Silence about it, leaves it where it was, and thereby establishes it. And we rejoice that this is the case. Yes, my brethren, let us rejoice, that the infants of believers belong to Christ as the head of the church, and as church members, may be received in his name, because they belong to him. and are to be received as disciples, and so are to be baptized.

III. The mode of baptism.

This is not considered as equally essential, as the right of the infant seed of believers to the seal of the covenant. Strange and unnecessary disputes have arisen about the meaning of the original word, translated to baptise, as used by classic writers. Homer and Pindar, and Sophocles, and Aeschylus, and Aristophanes, and a host of other Greek authors have been ransacked and plundered, to find the meaning of the Greek verb, and its derivatives. And for what use? We care not how heathen writers used it, but how is it used in the sacred book? This is the inquiry. What would be gained, in reference to the Lord's Supper, were we to inquire ever so minutely, how the Greeks understood the word translated *supper*? The same thing might be said of the word which we translate *covenant*. How is the word baptize used in the New Testament? What is its meaning? We answer, it universally signifies to wash, purify, or cleanse, either physically or morally. Even when figuratively used, it supposes impurity some way, and has in it the idea of purifying. And this is the meaning, whatever may be the mode of administration, whether by sprinkling, pouring or immersing. Water alone is the symbol appointed to be used. It is an emblem of the blood of Christ. As water, when applied, cleanses from physical impurity, so the blood of Christ applied by the Holy Spirit "cleanses from all sin," 1 John i. 7. The water in baptism, has, in itself, no virtue, or efficacy to cleanse from sin. It is only the symbol of that which has the cleansing virtue. The baptizing, is the applying the water, as the emblem of washing. The mode is not the baptism. Water is poured on a person's hands, to wash them. The pouring is not the washing. A man dips his hands in water, for the purpose of washing them. The dipping is not the washing. So as to the mode of baptism, neither the sprinkling

the pouring, nor the dipping is the baptism, but the water applied. Not the manner of applying the water, but the water applied, is the emblem of the blood of Christ, and therefore nothing depends upon the quantity. A few drops of water are as much an emblem of the blood of Christ, as the Ohio river. Christ gave no specific direction as to the manner of applying the water. The command is to baptize, and from the circumstances, and allusions in scripture, together with the examples of baptising on record, we learn that water alone is the “sensible sign” to be used; Eph. v. 26: “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” Acts x. 46, 47: “Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” It does not appear that the different ways in which water may be applied, can at all affect the validity of the sacrament. In warm climates, and where bathing is much used, as necessary to health, immersing the body in water, may be profitably used, if it be not made essential to the ordinance, but in colder climates, and where health might be endangered it would be improper. God says, Hos. vi. 6: “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice.” If Baptists contended only, that immersion was a proper mode of baptism, and that it “was rightly administered” by dipping, as pedobaptists say of sprinkling, there would have been no cause of complaint. But they contend, that immersion is no mode of baptism, but the thing itself—that nothing is baptism but immersion, and that those who are not dipped are not baptized at all. We believe, on the other hand, that baptism is rightly performed by sprinkling, and that the word baptism in the New Testament does not always signify immersion. We refer for example, to Heb. ix, 10: “Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings,”—the original is baptisms—the Jewish purifica-

tions. Before we inquire what these were, we may notice a dispute that took place between “some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying,” recorded in John iii, 25; to which it would seem that John’s baptism gave rise, strongly suggesting that the manner of John’s baptism resembled the rite of purification among the Jews. The dispute was not about the manner, but whether John’s baptism was superior to their purifications. Now we know that the purifications under the law, were made by sprinkling, and not by dipping. Let us look at some of these purifications that the Apostle calls baptisms. In Levit. xiv. 7, we have an account of the cleansing of the leper by the priest. “And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean.” So also when a house was to be cleansed from the plague of leprosy, verses 51, 52. “And he shall take the cedar wood, and the hyssop, and the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird, and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times. And he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar wood, and with the hyssop, and with the scarlet.” In both cases the act of purification was by sprinkling. Yet this is one of those *baptisms*. In the same manner were the Levites cleansed, Numb. viii. 6, 7. “Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And thus shalt thou do unto them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them.” This is another of these baptisms, and yet it is not immersion. How would it appear if the word in Heb. ix. 10, had been translated *dippings* instead of *washings*, and applied to such sprinklings as we have noticed? and yet these were part of the “divers washings,” to which the Apostle alludes, which in the original, he calls baptism? Another

of these baptisms by sprinkling, we have in Exod. xxiv. 8, when Moses sprinkled the congregation of Israel with blood at Mount Sinai. "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you, concerning all these words." But time would fail to enumerate all the "divers baptisms," to which the Apostle alludes.

In Luke xi. 37, 38, we have an instance recorded where baptism and immersion do not appear to be synonymous terms. A certain Pharisee had invited the Savior to dine with him, with which invitation he had complied. The Pharisees superstitiously observe the washing of the hands before eating, especially if they had been exposed to be touched by a Gentile, as that, in their estimation, would have rendered them ceremonially defiled. Jesus paid no respect to this superstitious opinion, but sat down to meat without being washed. The usage among the Jews, was for inferiors to pour water upon the hands of superiors. Thus we are informed, 2 Kings, iii. 11, That "Elisha the son of Shaphat poured water on the hands of Elijah." That this was the manner of washing in this case, we have something more than conjecture. "And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. The Greek verb here used, strictly translated, would have read *was not washed*. If he had washed himself, the verb would have been in the middle voice. But the verb is the first aorist passive, not middle, and signifies that which was done by another to him, as the passive voice necessarily imports.

Of the same kind is the baptism in 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21, where immersion cannot be meant. "The ark was preparing" says the Apostle, "wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto

even baptism doth also now save us.” That is, “Answerable to this temporal salvation in the ark from the flood, by means of the waters bearing it up, we now have salvation in Christ from sin and wrath, by means of the gospel ordinance of baptism, which in a sense may be called its anti-type. It is disputed whether the reference is made to the ark, or to the water, as the antecedent. It matters not. The ark, supported by the water, was the means of saving the inmates from being immersed in the flood, which was the wretched fate of those who were not in the ark. Whatever way water is applied in baptism, in order to be a “like figure,” as the Apostle denominates it, it must not be immersion, for that destroys the comparison entirely.

In Luke xii. 50, Christ uses the word *baptism*, in a sense, not applicable to immersion. “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” In his sufferings, Christ was sprinkled with his own blood abundantly. And the vials of divine wrath were poured out upon him. But he was not dipped in his own blood, and to be immersed in divine wrath is a metaphor not used in scripture.

In Mark vii. 4—8, the word baptisms, which we translate washings, is applied to such articles as cannot admit of immersion, brazen vessels, whatever be their size, for there is no limitation, and tables, the original word signifies beds, or couches. How could these be dipped, or what vessels would be large enough to hold them? In 1 Cor. xii. 13, the word baptized cannot signify immersed. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” This is the body mystical of Christ. And by the one Spirit is meant the Holy Spirit. Now how does this baptism take place? It is not the baptism of water performed by a minister of the gospel. It is the work of the Holy

Ghost by his regenerating power, and influences upon their hearts. Are these ever represented in Scripture by immersion? Certainly not. It would seem that the prophet Ezekiel prophesied of this very baptism, in words far enough removed from dipping, chap xxxvi. 2.5—27. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you.” And does not this prophecy, which foretells a moral result, purity of soul, to be produced on a coming day, by the sprinkling of the Spirit, also foreshew, that a certain application of water by sprinkling, would be emblematical of this? Acts xxii. 16. “And. now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” This refers to the baptism of Saul of Tarsus. This noted persecutor had been on his way to Damascus, with credentials from the high priest and the elders of the Jews to the principal persons of that city, authorizing him to bring to Jerusalem such believing Jews as had fled to Damascus, that they might be punished. When near the end of his journey, he was surrounded with a glorious light from heaven at mid-day, which caused him to fall to the earth, and at the same time struck him blind. Divinely directed, he was led to Damascus, and lodged in the house of one Judas, where he remained for three days, and during that time he did neither eat nor drink. At the end of the three days, Ananias, a Christian preacher, is directed of God to go to Saul, and, by laying on of hands, to recover him to his sight, and to baptize him. He obeys the command, goes to the house as directed, and addressing Saul as a brother,

his hands upon him, and his sight is restored. He then ordered him to arise, and be baptized. By examining the original, it will appear, that, instead of taking Saul, in his present weak and reduced condition, having fasted three days, away to Abana or Pharpar, to be dipped, Ananias baptized him on the spot. The word translated arise, is not, in the original, a verb in the imperative mood, as it is in our translation, but a participle, and strictly rendered, it would be *standing up*, or *having stood up*, be baptized. The same word is used, chap. ix. 18, where the fact is related, *and standing up he was baptized*. Is there any thing like dipping here? Does it not appear evident to every one who looks at it, that Saul was baptized standing on his feet, and, consequently, by water sprinkled, or poured upon him?

In the baptism of Cornelius and his friends, recorded in chap. x. 48, there is nothing favorable to immersion. We have nothing stated as to the manner, but what may be gathered from the circumstances. We are told that while Peter was preaching, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.” This was being “baptized with the Holy Ghost.” The manner may be learned by referring to the prophecy of which it was the fulfilment, Joel ii. 28: “And it shall come to pass, afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.” Then this *falling upon* them was the spirit poured out upon them, in miraculous gifts, and renewing, and sanctifying influences. But baptism was the instituted sign and seal of this baptism by the Spirit, and certainly, there would be some analogy between the one and the other. Well, the one is by *pouring out*, or *falling on*, so must the other. Nothing of the nature of dipping here. Besides, the Apostle says, “can any man forbid water”—one would naturally suppose, that the idea would be, why should not water be brought to baptize

those who are evidently fit subjects for baptism? “And he commanded them to be baptized.” No doubt the six brethren who accompanied Peter, (chap. xi. 12.) or, at least, some of them were ministers, and, of course, had a right to baptize, whom he might appoint to administer the ordinance, but there is no hint that they left the house to go to a river, to immerse them. The baptism appears to have taken place on the spot.

From the multitude baptized on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 41, it would seem incredible, that they could have been baptized by immersion. Let us consider the circumstances. Peter began his sermon at the third hour, our nine o'clock in the morning. From the skeleton of his sermon recorded, it must have been very long. Three thousand men are a vast multitude. There were as yet but twelve who had the right to baptize. Christ had given the commission to the eleven Apostles only, with the right of transmitting the office of the ministry to their successors. Matthias had been added to their number by divine appointment. But as yet they had ordained none. The day must have been considerably advanced before they began to baptize. Besides, there was no large river convenient. The brook Kidron was very small, and often had no water at all. The pools of Siloam and Bethesda would not afford room for such a multitude, and to suppose that the Jews, their inveterate enemies, would have allowed them the use of the temple baths, is out of the question. That the three thousand might have been baptized by sprinkling, or pouring water upon their heads, is reasonable enough. But immersion seems impossible. They appear also from the history given us, to have remained where they were, until the solemnities of the day were concluded. Certain it is, there is no hint of their removing, in order to be baptized. There is a circumstance too in the case

that should not be overlooked. They had no previous knowledge that baptism was to be administered. Of course, no provision could have been made for a change of dress. On the supposition of immersion, they must all have been dipped in their garments. This would have been sacrifice rather than mercy. I might mention another instance where the evidence for sprinkling would, to me, be much stronger than for immersion. It is the case of the baptism of the jailor and his family, recorded in Acts xvi. 33. "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes: and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." On the profession of the faith of the jailor, he and all his were straightway baptized. This appears to have taken place in the jail, whither the jailor had collected his family, and where he and they were baptized. For it is after the baptism that the jailor brought them out of the prison into his own house, and treated them no doubt with the best provisions he had, verse 34: "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Is it supposable that the jailor would leave his charge, and at midnight go with his family to a river, to be baptized by immersion? And would it have been safe for Paul or Silas, all raw, and sore, as they were, with the stripes, to have gone into the water, deep enough to perform the immersion? Or would they, who refused to leave the precincts of the prison, on the next day, until the magistrates, in person, would come and fetch them out, now leave the prison in the night? And is it reasonable to suppose, that there were facilities for immersion in the prison? From all the circumstances, we infer, that the baptism here was done by sprinkling, or pouring on water, and not by immersion. There remains another instance of what the Scripture calls being "baptized," to which our attention may be

directed, and which no ingenuity can make immersion. This is found in 1 Cor. x. 2. “And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” “All the church of Israel, both young and old, male and female, were baptized into the covenant, which God made with them by the ministry of Moses, their leader—and by their passing under the cloud, which hung over them, and through the sea, whose waters stood in heaps on their right hand, and on their left; which was typical of Christian baptism, whereby we, and our children, are visibly and solemnly initiated in God’s covenant, devoted to him, and engaged to be his.” The manner and circumstances of the children of Israel’s passing through the Red Sea, is called by the Apostle, *baptizing*, “and were all baptized—in the cloud, and in the sea.” There must, then, be some likeness between the passing through the sea, and the mode of christian baptism. We can easily conceive of the Israelite while walking on dry land in the midst of the sea, having the waters as a wall on each side, and the cloud spread over them, as having been sprinkled with drops from the cloud, and spray from the sea. This baptized the Israelites, children and all. But it was not immersion. They were not dipped at all, either in the sea, for they walked on dry land, or in the cloud, for it was above them. The truth is, we have their baptism set in opposition to immersion, Exod. xiv. 28, 29. “And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them: there remained not so much as one of them.” This was immersion. Very different, however, was the baptism of the Israelites; “But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.” Such is the difference between immersion and sprinkling, which proves that hap-

tism does not always signify immersion, as Baptists affirm; for the Israelites were sprinkled, and the Egyptians immersed: yet the Israelites, not the Egyptians, are said to have been baptized. I quote the following remarks from a respectable writer, on this subject. “This passage is important, inasmuch as it furnishes us with a compendious answer to all the objections of the Baptists, as to the *subjects*, as to their *qualifications*, and as to the *mode*. First, as to the subjects; they were all baptized, men, women, and children. Secondly, they were baptized unto Moses—that is, unto the doctrine, and precepts, and ceremonies, which Moses was going to give them; they were baptized, not *after* they were taught and instructed, but before they were taught, and that they *might* be taught; and, thirdly, they were not plunged over head and ears in the waters of the cloud and of the sea, but they were baptized by the copious dew and rain and water, which *sprinkled* them. They certainly were not plunged in the cloud; and as for the sea, we are told expressly, that they “went into the midst of the sea, upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them, on their right hand and on their left. Ex. xiv. 22. That they were *sprinkled* by the spray or mist, which was caused by the great agitation of the waters by the strong east wind, is natural and credible; but that they were immersed in the waters, is distinctly denied by the sacred historian.”—Colls’ Vindication of Infant Baptism, p. 299.

Baptists consider the baptism of John entirely in their favor in proving immersion. It may be observed, however, that as John lived under the Mosaic, and not under the gospel dispensation, his manner of administering baptism could not be a rule to us. But is it clearly proved, that John did baptize by immersion? Let us examine it. In the third chapter of Mathew’s gospel from the begin-

ning throughout, we have a full account of the commencement of John's ministry. Of his pedigree, parentage, birth, destination, and manner of life, till he was thirty years of age, the time "of his shewing unto Israel;" that is, the time when he would begin his public ministry, we have an account in the first chapter of Luke. He commenced preaching in the wilderness, in the country places, adjacent to the river Jordan, and there he baptized. His ministry was attended upon by immense multitudes, Math. iii. 5, "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan." How did he baptize? In verse 6, we are told simply, that they "were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." In what form or mode, we are not told, whether by pouring, sprinkling, or dipping. On this, the sacred historian is silent: which would lead us to conclude, that the manner of applying the water is not essential. Some assume, that the meaning of the word in the original, is to dip, or immerse, and nothing else. This settles it at once, by begging the question. We have already seen that the assumption is false—that it has other meanings in the New Testament. Several things are unfavorable to the opinion, that immersion was the mode practised by John. It is scarcely possible that John could dip *all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, and all the region round about Jordan*, and he was not authorized to employ assistant baptizers. Jesus authorized his disciples to baptize, but John had no such power. Were men and women both dipped, for both came to his baptism? Were they dipped in their clothes? We cannot suppose any alternative. Would this comport with safety? Would it not have endangered their health, if not their lives, if they had not with them change of raiment? But as John's baptism was a new thing in Judea, is it at all likely, that the people

would come thus provided? and if they had, where was the opportunity for changing their garments in such a crowd? It is said that they were baptized *confessing* their sins. The word is the present participle, not that they had confessed, but that at the moment of their being baptized, they were confessing their sins, which could not comport with their being under water at the same time. The probability is, that the people stood in ranks, near to, or just within the edge of the river; and John, passing along before them, cast water upon their heads or faces, with his hands, or some proper instrument, by which means, he might baptize many thousands in a day. And this way of pouring water upon them most naturally signified Christ's baptizing them with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, which John spoke of, as prefigured by his baptizing with water, verse 11. "*He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.*" Much stress is laid, by Baptists, on the meaning of certain prepositions, used by the Evangelist in relation to John's baptism, verse 6, "*in Jordan,*" verse 11, "*with water,*" the same preposition, which Baptists say should also be translated *in*, verse 16, *out of*, is supposed to imply, that the Savior had been immersed. These prepositions have different meanings in the New Testament, and though each has a radical meaning, yet as it is not always used with that meaning, the scope, and sense of the passage must determine the meaning. "*In Jordan.*" The primary meaning of the preposition here, is *in*, or *within*, but it will not always admit that translation. It has thirteen other significations, all shading off more or less from the primary meaning. In Jude, verse 14, it is rightly translated *with*. "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." So it is rightly translated, Mat. iii. 11, "with water;" and in the same verse, "he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

How ridiculous, not to say profane, would it be, to translate thus, "he shall baptize you *in* the Holy Ghost, and in fire." It may indeed have its primary signification when applied to the Jordan. But what is gained in favor of immersion? It does not follow, that because John stood in the river, he therefore dipped the people, who, as we have seen, might have been standing on the bank. Still it is not certain that either John, or those that he baptized, were in the river of Jordan at all. In John i. 28, we are told that John was baptizing "in Bethabara beyond Jordan." Bethabara was not a river, but a place in the neighborhood of Jordan. The word translated *in* must mean *at*. John was baptizing *at* Bethabara. In the same manner, might it be read, and were baptized *at* Jordan. Why then select the river? On account of convenience. So great was the multitude that came to be baptized, and a wilderness is not a place of springs of water. The reason given, John in. 23, for John's baptizing at Enon, near to Salem, would seem to favor this; "because there was much water there." Not a large river, or pool, for the purpose of immersing, but many rivulets, streams, or springs, for so the original words signify. Such an open country, overspread with small streams, would afford drink to the people, "and be very convenient for baptizing vast multitudes, placed in proper order, by way of pouring water upon them." Travellers complain that it is difficult to find this place, which is a proof that there is no river, or large body of water there. Much stress is laid upon the words *out of the water*, in Mat. iii. 16. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water." The preposition which is here translated *out of*, radically and primarily signifies *from*. It is so used three times in one verse, Mat. i. 17. It has many other meanings, but this is the chief. If it had been so translated here, the

proof for immersion would have been lost—so precarious it is to depend upon the translation of a preposition having a variety of meanings.

Baptists attach considerable weight to the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, recorded in Acts viii. 26—40, as being an undeniable proof of baptism by immersion. Let us examine the passage. In verse 38, the sacred historian says, “And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” How he baptized him, we are not told, but this we know, that water was the instrument to be used and applied by the administrator in this ordinance. The baptizing must be with water. Does immersion so apply it? Instead of applying water to the body, the body is applied to the water. We do not say that this irregularity in the *manner*, will make void the sacrament, any more than the irregularity of Moses in the *manner* of bringing water out of the rock, prevented the miracle from being effectual, which it did not. Numb. xx. 10, 11. Much stress here also is laid upon the meaning of the prepositions. Our former remarks will generally apply here likewise. The preposition translated *into* primarily signifies motion to a place. But it does not always imply the idea of being *within*. In John xx. 3—5, it signifies motion to a place, without entering into it. “Peter came first *to* the sepulchre,—yet went he *not in*.” In Acts xxii. 30, it certainly does not signify *into*. “And brought Paul down, and set him before them.” The preposition translated *out of* has also a great variety of significations. It denotes motion from a place, and its radical meaning is out of, or from. A period of time is viewed like a place, as a point of departure, and then this preposition is used, as in Mat. xix. 20. “All these things have I kept *from* my youth up.” Acts xv. 29, “*From*

which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.” It is evident that the translation of these prepositions will not settle the point in favor of immersion. Suppose the translation had been, *they went down both to the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up from the water*—which would be as true a translation as that which we have, then all the evidence they were supposed to afford for immersion as the mode in baptism, is gone.

But supposing that the prepositions here have all the import that our translation assigns them, they prove nothing in favor of immersion. They went both into the water. How far? Under the water? *Into* does not signify *under*, either in English or in Greek. Fifteen different meanings have been assigned to the Greek preposition, all which are found in the New Testament, but *under* is none of them. Besides, the word *into* is applied equally to both. If *under* be meant, they were both under. Then, after all, we are not informed in what manner Philip baptized him. But there are two circumstances that would seem to favor his being baptized by sprinkling rather than by immersion. One is, that the water is spoken of diminutively, “A certain water.” It is not the Greek word for a river, in the original, but a word derived from a verb, that signifies to rain. It was in the desert, and no river, otherwise it would have had the name river. It seems to have been a collection of rain water, in some hollow place, below the road, suitable enough to afford water for sprinkling, or pouring, but not likely to afford enough for immersing the body of a man. And that it was necessary for both to go a little way into the water, for the convenience of lifting up water in order to sprinkle the eunuch. The other circumstance is, the connection between what he had been reading, and baptism. The place which he was reading,

and which, it would seem, he was reading aloud, when Philip approached the chariot, was the Prophecy of Isaiah, chap. liii. 7, 8, according to the version of the Septuagint then in use. The Apostle must have explained to him the nature of baptism, that it represented the blood of Christ with which he would *sprinkle many nations*, and that *kings should shut their mouths at him*; that is, should submit to him, and no more speak against him. Now it is most likely the eunuch had read this, for it was but a few verses before those that Philip found him reading, and was most suitable to his case. No doubt the sight of the water, rather unexpected in a desert, suggested the idea of desiring immediately to embrace the opportunity of being baptized. This being intimated to Philip, and he having received satisfactory answers from the eunuch, gave his consent. Then the eunuch having ordered the chariot to stop, Philip and he went down together to, or into, the water, and Philip performed the office of baptism to the eunuch, no doubt, according to Christ's institution, by washing him with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; but in what way, not a hint is given. Certain it is, "that the act of baptizing is something quite distinct from either the going down into the water, or the coming up out of the water." The ordinance having been administered, they both came up the rising ground from the water, and "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

In Rom. vi. 4, Baptists find, as they suppose, a strong proof for immersion, as the proper mode of baptism. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." We have a similar text, Col. ii. 12, "Bu-

ried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him." It is extremely doubtful whether there be any allusion at all to the mode of baptism in these verses. Many eminent commentators think there is not, with whom I am fully agreed. The passages evidently point out in figurative language, what baptism represents, and the obligations under which we are laid by baptism, namely, our union to Christ, thereby obtaining an interest in his death, his burial and resurrection, and by virtue derived from him, as the living head, we, being raised from the grave of a natural state to a spiritual and heavenly life, should walk before him in love, in holiness and new obedience. Making baptism a symbol of the burial and resurrection of Christ, is the great mistake and error of the Baptists. Neither of the sacraments has any symbolical allusion to the burial of Christ. They both have a direct reference to that which made the atonement; namely, the death of Christ. The water in baptism, represents the blood of Christ, shed for the remission of sins, to be applied for washing and cleansing. Circumcision represented the same blood, which was to be shed for the same purpose. The sacramental supper is a memorial of Christ's death, not his burial. His body broken and his blood poured out, to be food and nourishment to the faith of those who are washed. Thus we see, that the sensible signs, in both sacraments, represent the death of Christ, though for different purposes. Christ has appointed no distinct ordinance, as a memorial of his burial. His lying in the grave, formed no part of the atonement. That was finished, as himself informs us, by his death. The shedding of his blood procured the remission. His lying in the grave, served for other, and valuable purposes. It was necessary, to prove that he was really dead, and lying in the grave was not a distinct article, but the continuance of death —to fulfil the types and ancient pro-

phencies—to prepare for his own resurrection, and to sweeten, perfume and sanctify the grave, as a bed of rest for the bodies of his saints who must lie there. Men, without Christ’s command, invent ordinances, and symbols of their own. Some must have holy-days, and festivals, others the sign of the cross in baptism, and others, a representation of Christ’s burial, as well as the emblem of his blood. I quote the following remarks from a judicious writer. “Why this burying in baptism should so much as allude to any custom of dipping under water in baptism, any more than our baptismal crucifixion and death should have any such reference, I confess I cannot see. It is plain it is not the sign, but the thing signified in baptism, that the Apostle here calls being buried with Christ; and the expression of burying alludes to Christ’s burial: As Christ was buried, that he might rise to a new and more heavenly life. So we are in baptism buried, i. e. cut off from the life of sin, that we may rise again to a new life in faith and love.

CONCLUSION.—We have thus brought to a termination this protracted discussion on the litigated subject of baptism. It occupies a prominent place in the system of Theology, and is therefore entitled to our serious consideration. Yet, brethren, the more important and solemn enquiry for us to answer, is, have we received the baptism of the heart, by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God? Baptism by the minister of the sanctuary, is *not* regeneration. We have been baptized; have we also received the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost?

This discussion also teaches us, that the ordinance of baptism is not determined by the mode of its administration. The application of water to the proper subject, by the qualified administrator, and in the appropriate name,

is baptism. Our convictions, from the sacred testimony, do indeed lead us to believe, that aspersion, or sprinkling, commends itself to us, by approved examples, both from the scriptures, and the history of the church, and is every way more consistent with the nature of the ordinance. Yet, let us remember, that *mode* is the least important thing in this sacrament; otherwise, more specific directions would have been given. Never let the churlish illiberality of *unchurching* all who differ from our mode, have a place in our minds. It is the sacrament of baptism, in whatever manner the water is applied by the proper administrator. Finally, let us rejoice that it is our blessed privilege to live in a dispensation of the grace of God, whose distinguishing badge is the circumcision of Christ—Christian baptism, instead of the bloody rite under the Mosaic economy.