

mises you would assume, we are carried back to the question of the right of infant membership, and here the burden of proof lies not on us but on you. We have proved that the constitution of the Church under the Old Testament contemplated the membership of infants—and it is for you to prove that not only the outward dress, but the essential features of the Church have been changed under the Christian dispensation”

We are at liberty to ask at this point of the discussion, “Do our Baptist friends invariably deem positive precept or example, (to the exclusion of all inferential proof) necessary to sanction any religious observance? Do they not allow female communion? Have they any positive precept or example in the New Testament to appeal to for this practice? Upon what principle do they allow females to approach the Table of the Lord?” If they reply, “Females were admitted to the corresponding ordinance under the Old Testament—the constituent membership remaining the same—no repeal of this privilege;” then we say, this is inferential reasoning not positive statement, and that these are the very grounds upon which we receive into the Church the children of professed believers. If it be urged, “But these are fit subjects for receiving benefit from the ordinance,” we reply, So are infants, and every objection founded on the incapacity of infants or on involuntary obligations, &c., implies a reflection on the wisdom and goodness of God, in appointing the ordinance of infant circumcision. If the benefit to be derived from baptism were tied to the moment of its administration, the objection would have some force. But this is not the case. A beggar’s child receives the title deed of a noble estate and ample revenues. That deed is signed and sealed to him while an infant, but its possession is suspended upon his compliance with certain conditions when he should come to mature years. Would the signing and sealing of that document be a meaningless act? Would it not be a great motive to the parents or guardians of that child to instruct him in the conditions, and frequently to set before him the prize which may, which shall be, his, if he prove himself worthy. Would it not prove a motive to the child himself? And what else is baptism than this? It is God’s seal of that glorious inheritance, purchased by the blood of Christ, and guaranteed to the faith of the believing sinner. It is the parents’ part then, and the Church’s part to tell the baptized child of that inheritance—of his obligation to accept, and prepare for it—of God’s assurance given in the promise and sealed in the ordinance that it shall be his if he but hold out the hand of faith for its reception—of God’s solemn declaration that it shall be forfeited if he continue in unbelief. But there is this difference between the case I have supposed and that of the baptized child. All the efforts and pains of the parent may never lead that child to comply with the conditions upon which alone the estate can be possessed. The efforts of the Christian parent would be equally uncertain, and in the end assuredly equally unsuccessful, were it not for these sure promises upon which in the training of his offspring he rests his hopes. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Oh! if Christian parents and the Christian Church would ever act under the stimulus of that blessed promise in the oversight of their baptized children, what glorious results might we look for! Infant baptism would no longer be what in too many instances it *practically* is a meaningless ordinance, but it would be one pregnant with comfort and blessing. We hope, God willing, in a future number to offer a few remarks on the relation of baptized children to the Church, and on the mode of baptism.