

and on the other, of man's obligation to yield obedience to the requirements of a covenant keeping God. Agreeably to this, the same ordinance is called by the Apostle "a seal of the righteousness of faith." (Ro. iv, 11.) It is of importance clearly to understand the meaning of this expression. It does not mean that circumcision was the seal of an actually existing faith, or of a righteousness actually in the possession of an evangelical faith, for many parties who received the seal did not possess this faith, and many (infants) were not capable of exercising it. But it was "a token of the covenant" which God graciously designed to enter into with man—a seal on God's part and not on man's. But to make this matter clear, we must here advert to one peculiarity of the covenant of which it was the seal. A covenant amongst men consists of a compact between two parties by which they come under mutual obligations. The fulfilment of the obligations of the one contracting party binds the other to the fulfilment of his, and *vice versa*; and the non-fulfilment of stipulations by either party releases the other from obligation. But it must be borne in mind that these contracting parties were under no antecedent obligation on either side to enter into such a compact. But, in this last feature, the covenant of God with man differs essentially from any covenant which man makes with man. God's covenant comes to us with the sanction and authority of a law binding upon every son of man. God not only invites us to enter into the bonds of "the everlasting covenant," and offers to receive us into covenant, but as our Creator and supreme Lawgiver he commands us, his creatures, to comply with the invitation. I may be indisposed to accede to the proposed terms of a fellow man—I may have the right to refuse his proposed covenant—but I have no right to object to the terms or to refuse the covenant of my God. The covenant of grace thus assumes the aspect of a law, so far as man's duty is concerned, still retaining the features of a covenant, because in it God makes gracious promises to man, while he requires of them certain corresponding duties. In its character of a covenant, men are made parties in it; in its character of a law, they are bound to become such. In all this we are not illustrating the fact that the covenant God enters into with man is, strictly speaking, only the application of the covenant entered into with his own beloved Son, because this discussion would be foreign to our present purpose.

The seal of the covenant then is one attached to it by God, and not by man, and certifies that it is God's covenant, and that all the blessings promised are free to all who are within its bonds. This seal is set on the parties not by man, but by God, and all marked out by Him as within the covenant are to receive the seal, and it is at their peril to refuse a compliance with any demand indicated in the seal. By God's command it was placed upon all the male children of Abraham's household, (Gen. xvii,) though their consent could not be asked or obtained, and for this reason, that whether they homologated the act or not, they were under the unquestionable obligation to enter the covenant. In the Abrahamic Church, before the introduction of the Mosaic ceremonial, children received the seal of the covenant, which we have seen was the covenant of grace, and were thus recognized as within the pale of the visible Church. By this "seal of the righteousness of faith" they were taught that an all-sufficient and all-perfect righteousness was provided in the covenant, which was free to and obligatory upon the acceptance of their faith. They were reminded, when arrived at years of discretion, that the Lord's vows were upon them, and it remained for them to say whether they would joyfully accept the immeasurable boon of having "God for their God, &c.," and cheerfully comply with his requirements, or whether they would incur the fearful guilt of repudiating the Lord's claim set forth in the ordinance of circumcision, and refuse that covenant which came to them charged with boundless blessing, and the acceptance of