

your indulgence, while I offer a few practical reflections: and I trust that your conscience will be as far from reproaching you with unfaithfulness, as your heart will be from charging me with vanity, if, with all humility, and without any design either to instruct or rebuke an elder, I commence with a quotation, every one of which, I must confess, extorted from me the exclamation—"This day I remember my faults!"

I. It is not a little to be regretted, that this ordinance is so rarely made the theme of discussion in the desk.

"Why such a difference is made (by ministers of the gospel) between two institutions of Christ—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—invested with the same authority, solemnity; and influence, I am at a loss to determine. But whatever may be the ground of this distinction, I am satisfied it cannot be a good one.—There is too much reason to believe, that not only the persons, particularly the children who have been baptized, but the parents, also, are in many instances, lamentably ignorant of the nature of this institution; the truths which it declares, the duties which it involves, and the privileges which it confers. Were these things made more frequently subjects of preaching; were they clearly illustrated, and solemnly enforced; there is the best reason to believe, that it would become a far richer, and more extensive blessing to mankind."(b)

II. Is it not a circumstance equally to be lamented, that many of those parents who are certainly well acquainted with its nature and obligations, should, on a subject of such importance, be so unhappily indifferent?

Many, it is believed, there are, who will read their own condemnation in the following beautiful and faithful representations, drawn by masterly hands, and I trust they will also see, that Infant Baptism is an ordinance which has been frequently misrepresented, and more frequently undervalued, and misunderstood.

"It is no wonder that the great mass of children are so wicked, when so few are put under the care of Christ by humble, praying, believing, parents. Let every parent that fears God, bring up his children in that fear; and by baptism, let each be dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Whatever is solemnly consecrated to God, abides under his protection and blessing."

"Perhaps there is not, in the world, a sight more interesting, than that of an infant offered up by believing parents to God in baptism. The helpless circumstances of the child; the peculiar tenderness of the relation, existing between it and the parents; the strong expression of their faith in God, in giving up their beloved offspring to him, devoting it to his service, and engaging to train it up for his glory; the exhibition of their reliance on the blood of Christ, and the agency of the spirit of truth, to cleanse it from its original pollution; the affecting manifestation of the divine mercy and goodness in permitting us thus to offer up our children to God; united to the solemnities of the day, the place, and the occasion; form a combination of facts, and doctrines, and duties, scarcely paralleled in the present world. On the minds of parents, particularly, the impressions made cannot fail, unless through very gross stupidity, or gross wickedness, of powerfully persuading them to the duties, involved in this dedication. Of the same nature are the impressions, which will very naturally be made on those who are present at the administration. Persons, heretofore dedicated to God in baptism, will very naturally feel anew their own baptismal obligations: while those, who have dedicated them will realize, also, the privileges, to which they and their offspring have been admitted; the engagements, which they have made; and the duties, which in a peculiar manner they are required to perform.

III. "Persons, baptized in their infancy, are here solemnly reminded of their own peculiar duties; and severely reprov'd for their negligence in performing them.

"How many persons are there in the christian world, "who have been dedicated to God by baptism in their infancy, and who yet never thought of a single privilege, realized a single obligation, nor performed a single duty, created by this ordinance! It is perhaps questionable, whether some of them are not now ignorant, whether they have been baptized or not. How melancholy are these facts! How full are they of shame and sin! How productive ought they to be of remorse, contrition and amendment! God has called you, my young friends, into his visible kingdom in the morning of life. He has publicly sealed you as his children: and planted you in the nursery of his church. Remember