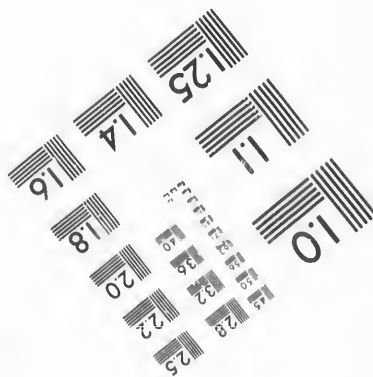
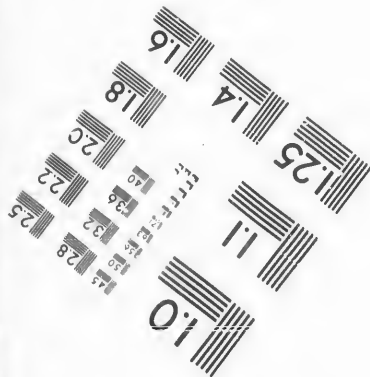
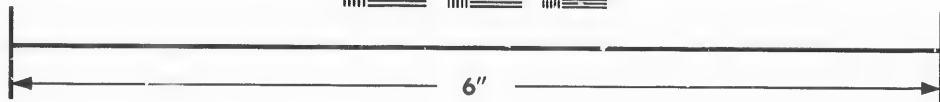
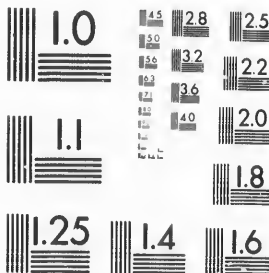


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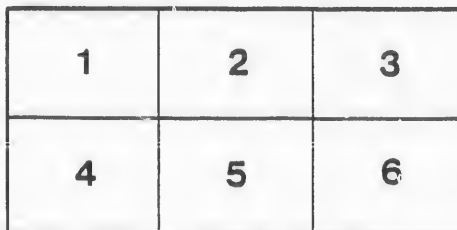
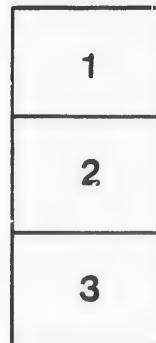
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PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

ON

BAPTISM.

BY

REV. EDWARD WILLIAMS, D.D.

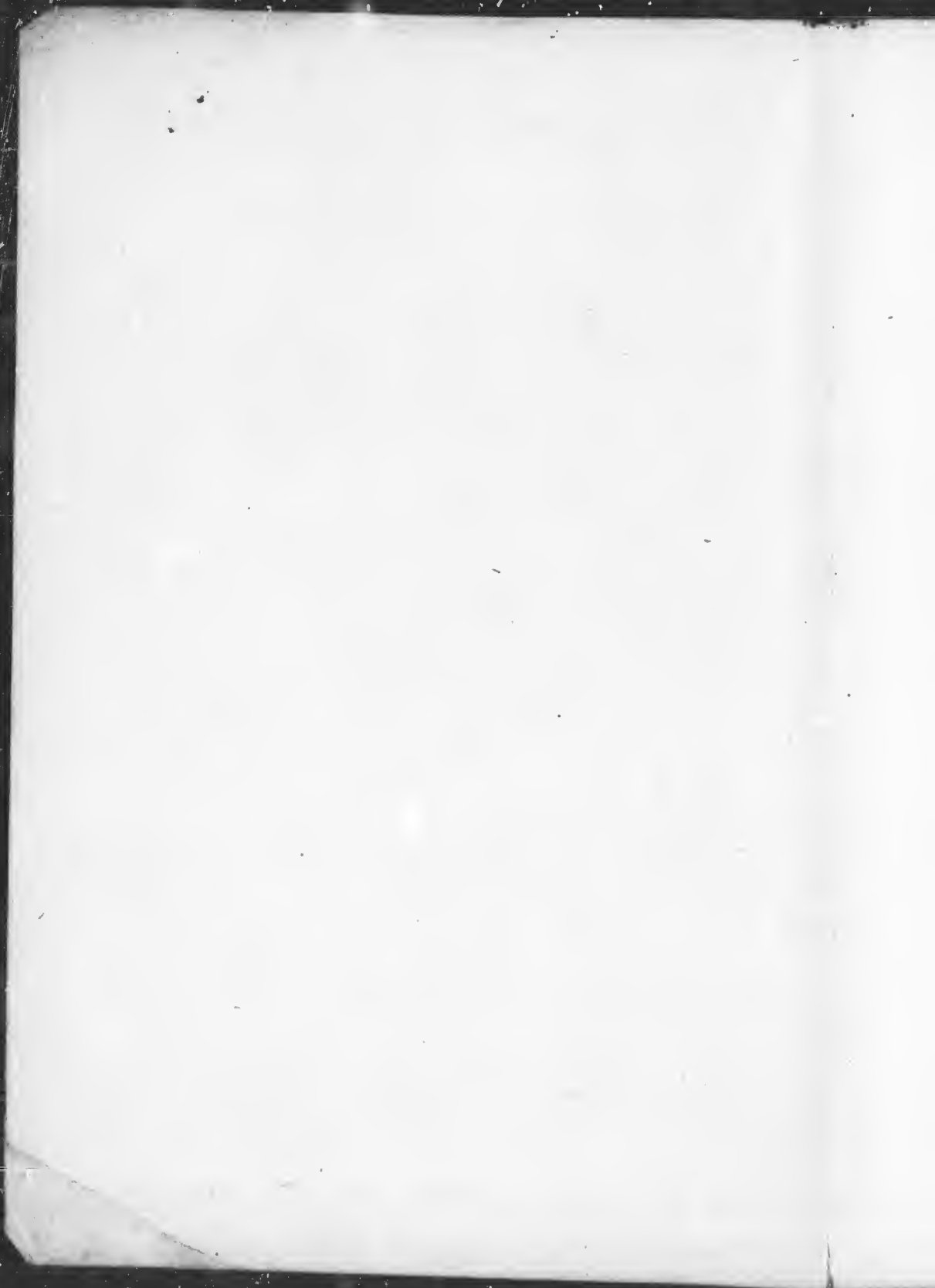
Extracted from his larger Work on Baptism.

Edw. Williams

CHARLOTTETOWN:

PRINTED AT THE "PROTESTANT" OFFICE, QUEEN SQUARE.

1863.





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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

THE following admirable Reflections on Baptism are republished by a Presbyterian Minister. The object in view is to place in the hands of young people, baptized in infancy, a guide to understand the use they ought to make of this ordinance of the Lord. It has been felt that such a work is a desideratum. Whilst the number of works written on the mode and subjects of Baptism may be set down as infinite, few, comparatively, address themselves to the end contemplated in the following reflections. The work is sent forth with the earnest prayer that it may prove a blessing to those who read its pages.

Prince Edward Island, October, 1863.

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PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS :

CONTAINING A RATIONAL AND DEVOUT IMPROVEMENT OF
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM, AND PARTICULARLY
INFANT BAPTISM.

§ 1. Introduction. § 2. Practical Reflections:—(*First,*) From the consideration of our being *baptized* persons; as to—§ 3. First, Faith. § 4. Second, Gratitude. § 5. Third, Repentance. § 6. Fourth, Self-dedication. § 7. Fifth, Universal holiness. § 8. Sixth, Exemplary diligence. § 9 (*Second*) From the consideration of our being baptized in *infancy*; as to—§ 10. First, Faith. § 11. Second, Gratitude. § 12. Third, Repentance. § 13. Fourth, Self-dedication. § 14. Fifth, Universal holiness. § 15. Sixth, Exemplary diligence. § 16-23. (*Third,*) As *parents*. § 24-29. (*Fourth,*) As *ministers*. § 30-36. (*Fifth,*) As *spectators*.

§ 1. The gospel contains good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people; and the legacy, the inestimable treasure, bequeathed to us by the last will and testament of our Divine Saviour, He *seals* not only with His blood to satisfy justice, but also by His *institutions* for our instruction and comfort. He condescends to teach us, in a sense, after the manner of men; while, at the same time, His method of teaching bears the stamp of infinite wisdom and transcendent love. In these institutions we discover the loving-kindness of the Lord adapting itself to human weakness and human wants; hereby every faculty is addressed, every affection solicited, every sin discountenanced, and every Christian grace, pious disposition, and Divine virtue encouraged. And as this is the character of gospel institutions in general, so it is particularly of *baptism* in an eminent degree. Whether we consider ourselves as *baptised* persons,—as baptized in *infancy*,—as *parents*,—as *ministers*,—and as *spectators* of this ordinance, the practical and devout consideration of it will be attended with peculiar advantages.

§ 2. (*First,*) From the general consideration of our being BAPTIZED persons, without any reference to the time when, we may gather many profitable reflections for the

important purposes of encouraging our *faith*, provoking our *gratitude*, furthering our *repentance*, engaging our *self-dedication*, advancing our *holiness*, and of exciting our *diligence*.

§ 3. First, Is baptism a *seal*? What an objective ground of *faith* does it exhibit!

Am I a *baptised* person? Then I have not only God's word of promise, and His solemn oath, to encourage my faith in His gospel, but also this standing institution which was applied to me for that purpose. As an oath puts an end to all strife, so does the legal *sealing* of an instrument. And can I any longer doubt that the promise, is for *my* use? Surely the bare *word* of the God of truth, who cannot lie, were enough to suppress every rising doubt respecting the matter testified; but when He confirms the testimony with an *oath*, He seems willing *more abundantly* to encourage my faith. And yet, as if this were not sufficient, He puts the matter so far out of doubt as to point me out *by name*. He hath put His *own name* upon me; and His language, in effect, is—I will be *thy God*, thy Father, thy everlasting portion: how long wilt thou be faithless? Can faith, the most rational faith, require any more? Lord, let me never be guilty of the impious crime of disbelieving the freeness of Thy grace, Thy willingness to save me, even *me*, however oppressed with guilt, and defiled with pollution! I can never distrust myself too much; but is it possible to put too much trust in the Lord, to put too much confidence in my Divine Shepherd? Does He call me by my name? Has He set me apart for Himself? Wherefore should I doubt, or what possible plea has unbelief to urge?

Faith should respect a Divine *testimony*. But *what* is the testimony of God? That God *offers*, nay, *gives*, unto me eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Is it on *condition* of future amendment and a virtuous conduct? No; the encouraging *grant* is suspended on no condition whatever. My *possession* of the mercy sealed by my baptism is to be enjoyed by *faith*; and this faith of the operation of God purifies the heart, pacifies the conscience, works by love, dispels every guilty fear, and is produc-

tive of the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. Does diffidence object: "Why believe that the promise is to *you*, though baptized?" Nay, rather, *why not* to me? Am I not a sinner, under the sound of the gospel, and set apart to its privileges? And is not this one of them that Jesus Christ is willing to save me from sin and hell, and from the hand of all that hate me? that I may by *faith* enter into rest, by faith be justified from all things, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, receive reconciliation and atonement, have my iniquities subdued, and my soul everlastingly saved? If I may not receive these blessings by *faith*, without the previous condition of my performing works of righteousness, what would become of me as a *dying* sinner? How otherwise could the gospel be good tidings, to sinners on the verge of eternity, as well as to those who may live to manifest their faith by their works?

Will discouragement again urge, "Faith is the *gift* of God, and therefore is not in my own power?" If it be the gift of God, as it certainly is, let me make the greater speed in making my application to Him for it. And even *this* is a privilege to which I am admitted. Nor does *faith* being the *gift* of God hinder *believing* to be my *duty*. Nor yet does my *attempting* to discharge a duty any way prevent the duty itself discharged being a *supernatural effect*. Is it not my *duty* to *attempt* to love God, to love Him for the sake of His infinite worthiness, as well as His stupendous love to a perishing world, in the gift of His Son? And yet if I am a true lover of God, I dare not ascribe the attainment to anything short of sovereign, distinguishing grace. Is the Divine *nature*, as possessed of all possible perfections and excellences, of all that is amiable and lovely, merciful and gracious, the proper object and rational ground of Divine love? So is the *promise* of God, confirmed by His oath and seal, the proper object and rational ground of Divine *faith*. The promise, sealed by my baptism, as a golden chain let down from heaven, is my only ground of hope as a perishing sinner. And *as a sinner* does the promise regard me; under *that character* it addresses me. O charming

news! O glorious discovery! Here is a remedy presented to me, placed full before my eyes, equally *free* and *efficacious*. Is it presumption to receive it, when I am assured by the messenger who brings it, that not to receive the bounteous donation, under the pretence that it belongs not to me *a sinner*, is in effect to charge the Promiser, the God of truth, with insincerity and falsehood? What greater evidence can scrupulosity itself wish for, that the grant of mercy is designed for *me*? What in the whole compass of the nature of things can be imagined as a proof to me, a sinful creature, that the Divine *promise* is intended for *my use*, than that it should be directed to me by name, accompanied with the oath and seal of Jehovah? Will not the blood and the water, will not heaven and earth, be swift witnesses against me if unbelief still prevails?

I am not required to believe what is either *unreasonable* or *untrue*. For what is more *reasonable* than to *believe* what the all-wise, almighty, and gracious God testifies, and testifies in *such* a manner? And it would be impious to suppose that He requires me to believe anything which is not *strictly true*. His *testimony* is not concerning my *goodness*, my *attainments*, my *actual possession* of grace, of faith, of holiness, &c.; but concerning *His own* exceeding great and precious promises, THAT BY THESE I MAY BECOME a partaker of a holy nature, with every new-covenant blessing through time and eternity. Let my baptism then not only remind, but also *assure* me, that with God there is mercy held forth for me; that even I, however undeserving and condemnable in myself, may have free access to a throne of grace, may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

§ 4. Second, Does baptism exhibit important *blessings*? Then how should the consideration of it provoke my *gratitude*!

Am I a *baptized* person? Then to *me* is held forth the *remission* of all my *sins*. The very institution itself is a faithful *witness* for the God of grace, that He stands ready to pardon. O glorious privilege, to have to do with the King of kings and Lord of lords, who, though I have

highly offended Him with my sins, holds in his gracious hand a free, full, and everlasting pardon! Am I placed in His Church by baptism? With *additional evidence*, therefore, may I consider the following wonderful words addressed to *me*:—"The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) And as these words were proclaimed for the use of the guilty and alarmed Israelites, after the two *first* tables of stone were broken, occasioned by their idolatry and folly; so are they directed to me now, after all my past follies and provocations. Even to *me* are the following words directed:—"Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, [O wonderful retaliation!] even I, am he who blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance; let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified," (Isa. xliii. 24-26.) Lord, this is not the manner of men: Thou givest liberally without upbraiding. In grateful wonder, I would reply, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all *my* sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the *truth* to Jacob, and the *mercy* to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old," (Micah vii. 18-20.)

Am I a *baptized* person? Then still greater *blessings* are yet granted and sealed to me. For hereby I am *assured* that *salvation* from the malady of sin, the dominion of lusts, the malice of Satan, and the pains of hell, is exhibited and presented to *me*. And as this invaluable blessing is directed to me *by name*, ever since I have borne the name of my Saviour, received at my baptism, so it comes as a free gift, and without charge. "Stand still," therefore, "and see," in faith and affectionate gratitude, "the *salvation* of the Lord." I am invited to

the wells of salvation, without money and without price. How can I doubt either His power or willingness to save me to the uttermost? Is not this the voice of my Sovereign and Saviour: "Look unto me, and *be thou saved?*" And shall not gratitude, unfeigned gratitude, have a peaceful abode in my favored soul? Yes; "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies," (Ps. ciii. 1-4.) In Christ my Saviour I have a propitiation for my sins, and a robe of consummate righteousness. If taught of God to *understand* the things thus freely given me out of the unsearchable riches of His grace,—if my heart is *opened* like that of Lydia, to receive these inestimable benefits, I may further add: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations," (Isa. lxi. 10, 11.)

Do I still complain of spiritual dulness, impotency, and ingratitude? Let me further consider the ample contents of the promises, and see whether ingratitude itself will not be confounded at the rehearsal of them. For does not JEHOVAH say to me, as well as to Abraham, "I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward?" Does He not, in effect, invite me to take a view of a *spiritual* inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, as He did to Abraham concerning the terrestrial Canaan, who had nothing to trust in, more than myself or any other sinful descendant of Adam, but the *righteousness of faith* which was signified and sealed to him, as it is to me, by a Divine ordinance:—"Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and south-

ward, and eastward, and westward. For all the *heavenly* land which thou seest, to thee will I *give* it. Arise, walk through the *promised* land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for *I will give it unto thee.*" May I not appropriate the words of Moses to Israel, with a little variation:—"He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and *marvellously gracious* things which thine eyes have seen?" And how reasonable the following inference:—"Therefore thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God, and," as the best expression of thy gratitude, "keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, *always!*" May I not, without presumption, appropriate the words of Amasai to David, "Peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for *thy God helpeth thee?*" But am I afraid to admit this language, because only allusive? Then let me attend to declarations more directly designed for the use of the Church in all ages, and therefore *for mine*, as a member of it:—"Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. . . . For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. . . . I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy REDEEMER, the Holy One of Israel. . . . Thou shalt fan *thy spiritual enemies*, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel." And lest a discouraging surmise should have room to intervene, he adds:—"When the poor and needy seek water" to refresh their souls, "and there is none" in the whole compass of mere nature suited to their case, "and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys," (Isa. xli. 10-18.)

Am I a *baptised* person? Then I have the enlightening, instructing, and comforting influences of the Spirit of promise, exhibited for *my use*, with *superadded* evi-

dence and certainty. If earthly parents, who are evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall my Father who is in heaven give good things, even the greatest of blessings, His Holy Spirit, to them that ask Him? And why not to me? Have I any scriptural or any rational ground of suspicion? Yes; the same Lord who instituted water-baptism is ready to baptize me with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He will take of the things of Christ and shew them unto me. He is ready to guide me into all necessary truth,—to comfort me in every trouble,—to shed abroad the love of the Father in my soul,—to reprove me of every sin,—to help my infirmities,—to give me wisdom, and that liberally, without upbraiding,—to teach me the way of peace, holiness, and fruitful living to the glory of God. O my soul, what wouldest thou have more? Dost thou complain of hardness of heart, so that these and the like precious promises do not affect thee? Then remember that He will take away the stony heart, and will bestow a heart of flesh. Plead this promise, and that which follows:—"This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel"—of which house thou art, as a believer in Jesus—"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: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," (Heb. viii. 10-12.) When I consider, therefore, that these promises, grace and glory, and *every good thing*, are exhibited and sealed by my baptism, how should the consideration of it operate as a powerful incentive to incessant gratitude and thanksgiving! And—

§ 5. Third, What a call to *repentance* does the devout consideration of baptism afford!

Am I a *baptised* person? Then under what solemn, what inconceivably strong *obligations* have the above benefits laid me? For the greater the benefits, the

greater the obligations. Are the blessings sealed by baptism great, glorious, infinite, eternal realities? The love of the Father, the atonement and grace of the Son, the influences and fellowship of the Spirit? present peace and future glory? present pardon and everlasting life? Then, have I given these blessings held forth in the promise, and sealed to *me* by baptism, a *suitable* reception? Though directed and sent to *me by name*, confirmed by the oath and seal of God, how often have they been disregarded! How has the most insignificant object, the most trifling circumstance, the most uninteresting occurrence, or the most insipid tale, engrossed my attention, while the faithful and merciful record of Jehovah has found no welcome! The gracious message from heaven, though worthy of all acceptance, has long found me careless, perhaps wilfully ignorant, hard-hearted, in love with folly, in league with sin and hell. What shall I say? A prodigal son, bent on my own ruin, and lifting up the heel of rebellion against a gracious God! Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep at the remembrance of these things! How do I deserve to be fed with the bread of tears, and to have tears to drink in great measure, for breaking these bands asunder, and casting away these cords of obligation far from me! Nay, if I speak of demerit, how do I deserve to be cast into the hottest hell, to suffer everlastingly, for the misimprovement of such astonishing love and mercy! Would not my damnation be *just*? If the means of grace are enjoyed, and the grace of the means exhibited, what have I to say against the unfavorable sentence of my righteous Governor and Judge? Am I not an unprofitable servant? Have I not buried my talent in the earth? May not the Lord appeal to heaven and earth against my ingratitude, as he once did against Israel?—"Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up *a child*, and he has rebelled against me."

But am I so sinful, laden with iniquity, evil and corrupt; have I so forsaken the Lord, provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, and gone away backward, that

there is no hope? No; for His mercy endureth for ever. Even *now* am I told, that though my sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation." Oh the riches of Divine grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ! Though my sins be great, Thy pardoning love is greater. Though my crimes rise high, Thy mercy is higher. Oh the wonderful efficacy of the Redeemer's merits! "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." This my baptism sealed unto *me*. And is it possible that my hard heart should still remain unmelted under the hot beams of Divine, unchanging love? Does not every weapon drop from by rebellious hand? Does not evangelical sorrow pierce my very soul? Behold a debt of ten thousand talents freely forgiven! Though with my sins I have pierced the Lord of glory, yet looking to Him, by faith in His blood, He removes my guilt, takes away all iniquity, loves freely, pours into my soul peace with God, and leads me to rest and refreshing joys for His name's sake. These blessings, sealed by baptism, must needs either aggravate my guilt and misery, or else promote genuine repentance. Oh that they may answer the purposes of grace, and not of avenging justice! O my soul, despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to *repentance*?

Mr Matthew Henry well observes:—"Our baptism engageth us, not only to the first repentance from dead works, but to an *after* repentance, as there is occasion. Our first washing in the laver of baptism obligeth us every day to 'wash our feet' (John xiii. 10) from the pollutions we contract."* And as there is on every one baptized an *obligation* to repent, so he has the most abundant *encouragements* for it. For what is more desirable to the guilty than pardon, free, full, and everlasting? This was the encouragement Peter gave to the guilty Jews: Acts iii. 19, "Repent ye therefore,"—though ye delivered up Jesus, and denied Him in the presence of

* Treatise on Baptism, p. 195; Sir J. B. Williams's Edition, p. 1187.

Pilate; though ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead,—repent, “and be converted, *that your sins may be blotted out*, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” “While the hue and cry is out against the malefactor, he flies; but the proclamation of *pardon* brings him in. This kingdom of God (Matt. iv. 17) is come nigh unto us; it was in baptism applied *to us in particular*, that the *encouragement* might be past dispute.”*

§ 6. Fourth, The devout consideration of baptism is a powerful inducement to *self-dedication*.

If I am a *baptised* Christian, I have been *dedicated* to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by His minister; for this is necessarily implied in baptism. Was this *right*, or was it not? Nay, was it not a high *privilege*? If so, it must be right to *approve* of it, and to be *thankful* for it. Now, in what way can this be done *so proper* as by *self-dedication*? Rather, can a thankful approbation of the baptismal favor exist at all without it? Is not the withholding of this tribute a virtual denial of its being a privilege? But if the gospel be a privilege to fallen man, its direction to me in *particular*, signed, sealed, and delivered, must be a most singular blessing. I bless Thy glorious name, O Lord, that a covenant of mercy was ever announced to any of mankind—to Adam, to Abel, to Enoch, to Noah, to Abraham, &c.; but what shall I render unto Thee that this covenant has been, by a gracious providence, directed unto *me*,—has terminated upon *me*,—so undeserving and sinful! Was there anything in me that called for such discrimination? What am I, or my father's house, that I should be thus privileged? It is owing to a sovereign *providence* that my lot is not cast among American Indians, or the savages of Africa; and it is owing to sovereign *grace* that England is illuminated with the Sun of righteousness. When I think on these things, and the numberless blessings therewith connected,—when I consider that I have been ministerially:

* Treatise on Baptism, p. 105; or, p. 1187, as above.

dedicated to the only living and true God and Saviour of
 men, according to *His will*,—I say again, *what shall I*
render unto the Lord? What have I which I have not
 received? What tribute can my grateful heart bring
 unto the Lord which is not His own already? Yet He
 will not despise what I bring Him of His own. By the
 mercies of God, I will and do present, not only my *body*,
 but my *soul* also, a living sacrifice unto God, which is
 my reasonable service. Am I not *His* in all respects?
 Not to give up myself to Him, then, is to commit robbery
 and sacrilege. I am not only the work of His hand, and
 the sheep of His pasture, but also am *redeemed*, not with
 corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the pre-
 cious blood of Christ. How reasonable and just, there-
 fore, a voluntary and affectionate surrender of myself to
 my God and Saviour! And what exercise can equal it,
 either in *pleasure* or *profit*? Is it a *pleasure* to the honest
 mind to pay a just debt, or to the generous mind to make
 restitution? Unspeakably more is the pleasure and
 satisfaction I have in giving up myself, without fear or
 reserve, to the God of love and grace. How delightful
 the thought that I am not my own? I am bought with
 a price; I have been delivered up to my proper Owner;
 and now, with inexpressible complacency, I acknowledge
 my being the rightful property of my Redeemer. Oh
 that I may be found, while I have breath or being, glori-
 fying God in my body and in my spirit, which are God's!
 And surely as it is delightful, so it is *profitable*. While I
 resign all I obtain all; but while I kept myself to myself,
 I had neither pleasure nor profit. I was then a stranger
 to my best interest. Now appears, with peculiar force
 and beauty, the wise man's paradox:—"There is that
 scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that with-
 holdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."
 And again:—"There is that maketh himself rich, yet
 hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet
 hath great riches," (Prov. xi. 24; xiii. 7.)

Do I still find reservedness or sloth spreading their
 baneful influence over my soul? Am I still waiting for
 more powerful inducements? Behold, another induce-

ment presents itself—one that may well fill me with everlasting wonder! The all-sufficient God, (how shall I express myself?) JEHOVAH *gives Himself* to me. Astonishing conveyance! "I will be *thy God*," says He. He confirms it with His oath, and ratifies it with His *seal*. Does the Lord, by a covenant grant, make over His glorious self to me as my portion? This is surely an irresistible motive. What sort of a grant is it? Not an imaginary or a feigned, but a *real* and *sincere* grant. I *may* venture, I *would* venture, ten thousand souls, were they mine, on the sincerity and truth of it. If it be not a truth that I, as a *baptized* person, am privileged with this covenant grant, "*I will be thy God*," then I may question whether the sun ever shone upon Britain on a summer's day! Lord, in return, take sole possession of me! Make me Thy living temple; let my favored heart be the throne of Thy reigning grace; let it be my sweet employ, through time and eternity, to behold with open face as in a glass—the gospel mirror—the glory of the Lord, as my covenant portion, that I may be changed into His lovely image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

§ 7. Fifth, The devout consideration of baptism is a suitable and strong motive to universal *holiness*.

To be *baptized*, is to be devoted to a conformity with Christ: which consists in the destruction of the body of sin, and a life of purity, heavenly-mindedness, and spiritual liberty. By this ordinance of initiation, methinks the Lord says, with peculiar emphasis, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." To the Christian Church, set apart to Himself by the initiating rite, He in effect says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; . . . that *all around you* may, by your good works which they shall behol-

glorify God in the day of visitation," (1 Pet. ii. 9-12.) What is the end of our *holy religion*, of which baptism is the badge? Is it not "that we should be holy and without blame before *our heavenly Father* in love?"—that we may be presented "holy, and unblamable, and unreprouvable in his sight?"—that we should be "saved from our sins," and "redeemed from all iniquity?" Let me therefore, "gird up the loins of my mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto me at the revelation of Jesus Christ: as an obedient child, not fashioning myself according to the former lusts in my ignorance: but as he who hath called me is holy, so may I be holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy," (1 Pet. i. 13-16.)

"We are by our baptismal covenant," says Mr Henry, "obliged to mortify sin, and in baptism receive the promise of the Holy Ghost for that purpose. 'We are buried by baptism,'—*i.e.*, we are, in profession and *obligation*, quite separated and cut off from sin; as those who are not only dead, but buried, are quite parted from the living, and have no more any intercourse, correspondence, or fellowship with them. We are likewise 'risen again' to another sort of life. Not as the widow's son and Lazarus were raised, to live just such a life as they lived before, but as Christ was raised; who, though He continued on earth forty days after His resurrection, did not shew Himself openly, nor converse with this world as He had done; but His life was altogether heavenly, and no more in the world. Through our baptism, *obliging* us to die to sin, and live to righteousness, we may be said therein to be buried and risen with Jesus Christ. A Christian, therefore, who is by baptism buried with Christ, and yet lives in sin, is like a *walking ghost*, or the frightful motion of a dead body. We should often remember that we are *buried*,—*i.e.*, cut off from a life of sin; and *risen*,—*i.e.*, entered upon a life of holiness. We should, therefore, see to it, (saith the excellent Davenant,) that what is done once sacramentally, in baptism, *should be* always done really, in the life."* Lord, grant

* Treatise on Baptism, pp. 174, 175; or, p. 1188, as above.

me the prevailing aids of Thy Holy Spirit, that I may reckon myself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord; that sin may never reign in my mortal body, that I should obey it in the lusts thereof. May I never yield my members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but may I yield myself unto God, as one alive from the dead, and my members as instruments of righteousness unto God—servants to righteousness, unto holiness; that now being made free from sin, and become a servant of God, I may have my fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, (Rom. vi.)

§ 8. Sixth, Baptism may be improved as a proper incitement to exemplary *diligence*.

Am I a *baptized* person? Then let me answer the great ends of my baptism—to fight the good fight of faith, not uncertainly as one beating the air, but with zeal according to knowledge; run the race set before me; press toward the mark of my high calling of God in Christ; redeem the time; work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work; be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. May He into whose service I am enlisted, into whose vineyard I am sent, and to whom I am accountable, cause me to “abound in faith and *all diligence!*” Oh that I may “shew *growing* diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that I be not slothful, but a follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises!” (Heb. vi. 11, 12.) “Baptism is a talent,” says Mr Henry, “which must be traded with, and accounted for. It is a price put into the hand to get wisdom: and with this, as with other talents, the charge is, ‘Occupy till I come.’ By working upon our souls a sense of the *obligations* we are laid under by our baptism, we put this talent into the *bank*, and, if we were not wanting to ourselves, might receive from it the blessed *usury* of a great deal of comfort and holiness.”* To further my holy diligence in those works and ways to which my baptism was designed to lead me, let me often recollect, and be deeply impressed

* Treatise on Baptism, p. 161; or p. 1180, as above.

by these truly wise maxims:—"He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the *diligent* maketh rich. He that gathereth in summer is a wise son; but he that sleepeth in harvest"—*the harvest of his Christian profession*—"is a son that causeth shame," (Prov. x. 4, 5.)

Alas! how many ignorant and slothful professors must one day take up this bitter lamentation, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved," (Jer. viii. 20.) Often have we been exhorted to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; but we stood against every call, careless and unmoved. We flattered ourselves that we *possessed* a talent, while yet it lay *unimproved*. "How many baptised persons are there," as Mr Henry justly observes, "who are altogether strangers to the covenants of promise! who look upon baptism only as a thing of course—nothing more than the custom of the country! No wonder they do not *improve* that which they do not *understand*. Baptism being the badge of our profession, to understand that is to understand our *holy religion*—the nature, duties, privileges, and designs of it; to *all* of which our baptism doth some way or other refer. It is sad to consider what ignorance of these reigns even in the Christian world; and how many are little better than baptiz'd heathens."* Nevertheless, "the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south," (Ps. cxxvi. 3, 4.) Some who are called by Thy name understand, and gratefully acknowledge, the great things Thou hast done for them, and the inestimable privileges conferred upon them; but others continue the deluded captives of sin and Satan. Oh that Thy Spirit may be poured upon all flesh! Then shall "the wilderness be turned into standing water, and dry ground into watersprings," (Ps. cvii. 35.) "Then the eyes of the *blind* shall be opened, and the ears of the *deaf* shall be unstopped: then shall the *lame* man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the *dumb* sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert," (Isa. xxxv.

* *Ibid.*, pp. 167, 168; or p. 1181, as above.

5, 6.) Then shall our fruit be holiness to the Lord; and it shall be found, "some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold," to the praise and glory of God; and the end everlasting life.

§ 9. (*Second*.) Let us now proceed to a devout and rational improvement of baptism as received in *INFANCY*. One very justly observes, "When an ordinance comes to be *disputed*, it is commonly *neglected*, or slightly attended, by the generality of people; and lies between them like a *controverted estate*, concerning which something is done to maintain the *suit*, but little to manure and improve the *land*. Men think it a sufficient plea for their sinful neglects in such cases, that it is a disputable thing; and till all be agreed upon the point, they hope they may be allowed to sit still and look on, and then engage when they see what side will prevail. Thus disputes about the *ministry* have made the ways of Zion to mourn, for the fewness of those that come to the solemn assemblies. This is, generally, the case of the ordinance of baptism. People have had it commonly buzzed in their ears that seeing the infant subjects of that administration are incapable of understanding it, and making present actual improvement, there is little reason to retain the practice of that which seems so barren and unprofitable. But holy men, who have made it their study to dive into the nature and use of all ordinances, and to work upon their own hearts by them, have, for many ages, no doubt, drawn abundance of sanctifying influence from it, and the *principles* and grounds upon which it hath been administered; and those of this age who have had the holy wisdom to turn matters of *dispute* into *practice*, have been able to say by their experience, in a manner, as the man born blind, in the dispute between him and the Pharisees concerning Christ, 'Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes,' (John ix. 30.) So they wonder it should ever enter into a dispute whether infant baptism be of God, or no, seeing it hath been, by the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God, a conduit of abundance of gracious supplies to them, for which they have had cause to

bleſs God the longeſt day of their lives. And the very experience of this is no ſmall encouragement to them to own and value it, ſeeing it cannot eaſily enter into their hearts, that God ſhould convey *ſanctifying influences*, for ſo many years, by a miſtaken and miſapplied ordinance; eſpecially when the main efficacy of that ordinance, in order to the mentioned effects, depends upon *that very circumſtance* of age wherein it is charged to be miſapplied. For though it may in ſome caſes be granted, that an ordinance adminiſtered with ſome conſiderable circumſtantial irregularities may ſanctify; yet that thoſe *irregularities themſelves* ſhould be the channels of ſanctifying grace is not eaſily imaginable. Now this is the caſe of *infant baptiſm*. Many holy men, of many ages, have found their hearts warmed and quickened, in the exerciſe of faith, repentance, love, thankfulneſs, by the conſideration, not only of *baptiſm* and the perſonal covenant therein ſealed, but alſo baptiſm under the circumſtance of *infant* adminiſtration. And, indeed, that the Spirit of truth ſhould dictate, and the God of truth answer thoſe prayers, which are offered up on ſo groſſly miſtaken grounds as thoſe of *will-worſhip*, (the crime generally charged on infant baptiſm,) ſeems moſt abſurd.*

But is not this gentleman *ſingular* in his opinion? Is not the ſuppoſed advantage more in *ſpeculation* than reality? Let the following language, uttered from the deliberate judgment of one whoſe *abilities* as a divine and whoſe *rational* and *ſincere devotion* as a Chriſtian, few will queſtion, determine:—"There would not be ſo much quarrelling about *infant baptiſm*, if there were but more care to make that practical improvement of it which is required. It is owing to a *carnal heart* that the *benefit* of it is not obtained, and then the thing itſelf is diſputed.

In this circle many a poor ſoul hath been made giddy: infant baptiſm is queſtioned, *becauſe* it is *not improved*; and then it is not improved *becauſe* it is *queſtioned*. If any man ſet himſelf ſeriouſly to 'do His will' in this matter, by a diligent and conſcientious improvement of

* Ford's Dialogue concerning the Practical Use of Infant Baptiſm: Epist. Dedicat.

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his baptism, 'he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether we speak of ourselves,' (John vii. 17.)" "There are *many* humble, serious Christians, who can experimentally speak of the *benefits* of it. For my own part, I cannot but take this occasion to express my *gratitude* to God for my *infant baptism*, not only as it was an early admission into the visible body of Christ, but as it furnished my *pious parents* with a good argument (and I trust, through grace, a prevailing argument) for an early dedication of my own self to God in my childhood. IF GOD HAS WROUGHT ANY GOOD WORK UPON MY SOUL; I desire with humble thankfulness to acknowledge THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF MY INFANT BAPTISM."*

§ 10. First, Was I baptized in *infancy*? Then I have an *additional* encouragement to exercise FAITH upon the *promise*. Were I baptized but *this day*, there would be an encouraging ground of faith, that the promise is *unto me*, signed, sealed, and delivered; but when I consider that this foundation of faith, the exhibited promise, has been laid and *appropriated* for my use, in *infancy*,—that the charter of conveyance has been incontestably *sealed*, almost as soon as it came into *existence*,—it is a *super-added* encouragement. "Baptism seals the promise of God's being to *me* a God," says Mr Henry, "and that is greatly encouraging; but infant baptism *increaseth* the encouragement, as it *assures* me of God's being the God of my fathers, and the God of my *infancy*." "Shall I question the kindness of one who is my own friend, and my Father's friend? the faithfulness of one who was in covenant with my fathers, and always true to them? It is a great support to faith to consider, not only that God is my God, but that He was so *betimes*. He who took me when I was *brought*, surely will not cast me off when I *come* myself, though weak and trembling and unworthy. He who began in ways of love and mercy to me *so early*, will not now be wanting to me, or backward to do me good. Loving-kindnesses, which have been 'ever of old,'

* Henry's Treatise on Baptism, pp. 155, 156, 118, or pp. 1170, 1171, as above

must needs be very favorable to faith and hope."* The nature of the gospel *grant* is such, that the *longer it stands* as a matter of record in favour of the party *baptized*, the stronger and more indubitable becomes his *title* to the things granted; wherefore, the consideration of my being baptized in my *infancy* is a circumstance of encouragement to *faith*. It is "usual to insert in the king's grants, that they are made, not at the suit of the grantee, but *ex speciali gratia, certa scientia, et mero motu regis*; and then they have a *more liberal* construction?"† But on the contrary, is it equity, and legal prudence, that "a grant made by the king, *at the suit of the grantee*, shall be taken most beneficially *for* the king, and *against* the party?"‡ Let this illustrate the superior advantages of the grant being made in my *infancy*, and sealed by baptism, compared with what was obtained *at the suit* of the grantee. It is true, the encouragement to faith is *abundant* every moment to a returning sinner, from the gracious *testimony*, the faithful record of Jehovah; but it is *more abundant* in proportion to the *early date* when the title was signed and sealed.

Lord, didst Thou find me out, in the course of Thy gracious providence, and cause Thine exceeding great and precious promise of mercy, forgiveness, and righteousness, Thy good Spirit and eternal life, to terminate on my *infancy*? Didst Thou thus find me out without my seeking or deserving? How free and sovereign Thy mercy! Didst Thou confer a legal *right* to these spiritual and everlasting blessings, by a *deed of gift*, directed, signed, sealed, and delivered *to me*, for my use and service, when I deserved no pity? Nay, when I deserved to be cast out into the open field to the loathing of my person, to be passed by and left polluted in my own blood, even then, in my tender infancy, in my helpless and wretched state, Thou hast had compassion upon me. Oh, the covenant care, the unparalleled kindness, of my heavenly Father! Let me take the account from

* Ibid, pp. 201, 303; or, pp. 1188, 1889, as above.

† Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. ii., book ii., chap. xxi., § 2.

His own lips:—"When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. . . . Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water," (Ezek. xvi. 6, 8, 9.) Astonishing favour! And though I have not come up to my privileges, and "have not remembered the days of my youth, but have fretted the Lord in all these things, and despised the oath in breaking the covenant," He still adds "Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed. . . . And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God," (Ezek. xvi. 60-63.)

One well observes:—"The saints are many times fain to appeal from *conditional* promises and comforts to *absolute*—viz., the *freeness* of justifying and renewing grace in the respective declarations and offers of them; upon the same reason may they have recourse to infant baptism—the most lively representation and obsignation of both these. This, therefore, being their refuge, if God's seal *add*, as it doth undoubtedly *to us*, any certainty to His word; then, surely, for such persons to reflect upon the *seal* of baptism administered to them in infancy must needs *fortify* them in that refuge. I now treat, not of considerations prevailing with God, but considerations working upon us; not such as further Him in point of *faithfulness*, but such as further us in point of *faith*. Now such things may be of precious use to *us*, as are not of a like influence upon God. All the arguments we urge in prayer do not at all move God, but only fortify

our *faith* to depend upon Him. So here, though God have a like reason in Himself to move Him to take care of a soul that became one of His family but *yesterday*, as of one that hath been in His family *forty years* or upwards, yet it must needs be a *more rational encouragement to us* to depend upon Him, *now* that we have been related *so long* to Him, than it would be to have begun a relation but yesterday."* This early relation was a peculiar encouragement to David's faith, when he said, "Thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art *my God* from my mother's belly. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help," (Ps. xxii. 9-11.) "Though every one that is a child of a believer had formerly, and still hath, a covenant right to God *before* circumcision and baptism; and so every such person, circumcised or uncircumcised, baptized or unbaptized, at least as long as the neglect is not his own fault, hath the *same plea* which we have been speaking of, yet he hath it not to urge with the *same evidence* and ground of *assurance* as he that can plead the covenant with the *seal* hath: otherwise it must needs follow, that the sacraments *add* nothing at all to the covenant in point of *certainty* and *evidence*; which I think no sober Christian will affirm."†

§ 11. Second, Was I baptized in *infancy*? Then I have an *additional* incentive to *gratitude*. How highly have I been honored, how greatly benefited! For from that *early* period has the pardon of sin, free salvation, eternal life, with every new-covenant blessing, been *sealed* to me. Had every circumcised Israelite, when grown up, special cause of *gratitude* for the particular circumstance of *infant circumcision*? So have I for my *infant baptism*. What a visible *relation* was then constituted between me and God in Christ! Was I then incapable of understanding the nature and force of the obligations under which I was laid? So was a circumcised infant; but the obligation was firm notwithstanding.

* Ford's Dialogue, ut supra, pp. 39, 40, 43.

† Ibid., p. 49.

He became from that time forth *additionally bound*, in duty and in gratitude, to the Lord. O my soul, art thou ever disposed to undervalue this privilege? Blush at thy ingratitude. If to be dedicated to God in baptism when an infant was not a privilege, what was? I may safely challenge ingratitude itself to shew that any benefit *greater* than this was or could be ever conferred upon me by my parents. When my ungrateful heart is ready to say, *What profit* is there in *infant* baptism? let it again reflect, *What profit* is there in *adult* baptism which is not more than counterbalanced by the former? I say it again—to be baptized when an infant is the *greatest* external privilege of which infancy is capable. And if at any time this is questioned, let me inquire what is a *greater*? If a greater there is, let it be produced, and it shall suffice. If not, let deserved gratitude glow in my breast for the distinguishing favour. I was then added to the Church *that I might be saved*. I was then constituted a visible member of Christ, that *I might be conformed to Him*. I was then put in the way I should go, that, when grown up, *I might not depart from it*. I was then visibly engrafted into Christ, *that I might bring forth much fruit*, and thus be found *His approved disciple*. Are not these high privileges? And especially when I consider that there was in me nothing meritorious to demand, nothing amiable to solicit these privileges. This time of my espousals was, indeed, a time of unmerited, unsolicited love. From a state of distance I was brought *near*. From a stranger I was made a “fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God;” not less so than any circumcised Israelite. All these privileges—let me not forget that—are of the nature of *means*. May I therefore not only cultivate a grateful spirit at the remembrance of all Thy benefits, O Lord my God, but also be careful to express my gratitude by a proper use of these beneficial means, that I may apprehend that for which I was apprehended of Christ Jesus!

§ 12. Third, Was I baptized in *infancy*? Surely, then, my miscomings, transgressions, and backslidings, are levelled at a circumstance of Divine goodness that

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makes the call to *repentance* much louder. "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." Every cord of obligation that is broken enhances guilt. The sins of a person greatly privileged are crying sins. Every time, and in every instance, that I have acted unworthy of my baptism, I have been guilty of breaking a cord of Divine kindness; so far have I shaken off the yoke, the easy yoke of Christ, from my neck.

Now, that *infant baptism* has the advantage over *adult baptism* in promoting *repentance*, or godly sorrow for sin, I think appears from the following extracts on the subject:—"When God aggravates the sin of His people Israel (Ezek. xvi.) under the similitude of a *child* taken into His special care from the very womb, He lays a sufficient ground for the deducing of this conclusion: That for any person or people, so related to God from *infancy*, as He there expresseth, to depart from God by sinning against Him, is a very great aggravation of sin. Suppose God, therefore, pleading against any sinner of the Jews' nation in the strain of that chapter, and you will see it yield as great aggravations of *personal* sins as *national*:—"Thou, in the day in which thou wast born, wast naked, and in thy blood, utterly naked and destitute of original righteousness, and defiled with the stain and guilt of original sin, an object of loathing and abhorrence to a pure and holy God as I am; yet when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. When I passed by thee and looked upon thee, behold, (and wonder at my goodness therein,) thy time (even that time) was a time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore to thee, *in circumcision*, and entered into covenant with thee, *saieth the Lord*, and thou becamest mine, and I washed thee with water, &c., and bred thee at my cost, *under my ordinances*, from that day; yet hast thou forgotten all this kindness, and rebelled against me." Alter the word *circumcision* into *baptism*, and make the application to yourself, and then see whether it doth not afford a cutting

aggravation of sin. Anabaptism yields no such aggravation of sin, for it allows no man any special relation to God, no covenant, no engaging ordinance, no peculiar covenant mercy, till actual faith, *i.e.*, till years of discretion."*

Another "ground of *humiliation* from infant baptism is from the consideration of the *apostasy* that, upon that account, is in the bowels of every such person's sin as was then admitted into covenant with God. And methinks I may to very good purpose write bitter things against *sins of youth* upon this ground. Ah, wretch! did God enter thee in His school, nay, admit thee into His family from a child? did He in much mercy make thee a covenanter with Himself? And yet, for all this, thou hast no sooner been able to speak or go, but thou hast spoken lies against Him, and gone astray from Him. Yea, since thou hast been capable of understanding thy way, thou hast, contrary to the duty of thy natural allegiance, entered into a contrary covenant and confederacy with the devil and death, and thine own lusts, and maintained a war with this God with abundance of youthful heat and activity. O sinner! remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and renew thy covenant with God, before, by more riveted and aggravated apostasies, thou provoke him to deal with thee as thou hast dealt with Him. Luther tells us a story of a virgin that was wont to resist temptation with this answer—*Baptizata sum*, 'I am baptized, Satan, and being washed, shall I with the sow wallow in the mire again?' I confess this is a prevalent caution from the *general* consideration of baptism; but I am much mistaken if it conclude not *more forcibly* when strengthened with this *special* circumstance of the time of the administration which we are now handling. Thus:—'Shall I sin against an ancient friend, mine and my father's God? Shall I sell the inheritance of my fathers? (1 Kings xxi. 3 4;) forsake my father's Friend? (Prov. xxvii. 10.) Shall I now forsake my Master in whose house I was born, and admitted to the privileges of His family as

* Ford's Dialogue, ut supra, pp. 49-51.

soon as I was born? Shall I now be reconciled to sin, to which I was a sworn enemy from my mother's breast? God did me the greatest (external) kindness I was capable of in my infancy, and what wrong hath He done me since that time, that I should now entertain a motion of unfaithfulness to Him?' 'God hath been my Master these fourscore years,' said old Polycarpus, 'and He hath all this while done me no hurt, and shall I forsake Him now?' Surely all the arrows in the quiver of Anabaptism will not pierce so deep into the heart of a temptation as this will.*

"Can I do otherwise than melt into tears of godly sorrow," says the pious Mr Henry, "when I reflect that I was baptized in infancy? For if so, then, by sin I have ill requited God's *early kindness* to me. I have offended my God, and the God of my fathers, who, upon my fathers' account, dealt so favorably with me. It is often mentioned as an aggravation of sin, that it is against *the God of our fathers*: thus 2 Chron. vii. 22, 'Because they have forsaken the God of their fathers.' So 2 Chron. xxviii. 6. Loved when a child, and yet revolting, and dealing treacherously! When we were polluted and exposed, then regarded, pitied, taken up, washed, adorned, taken into covenant, adopted into a good family; and was not that a time of love—love sealed, love insured, preventing love, unmerited love? What! and yet despise such rich love, spurn at such bowels! *Do ye thus requite the Lord? Is this thy kindness to thy friend?* How should we charge this home upon our souls in our repentance, and blush for our ingratitude? *Nourished, and brought up, and yet rebelling!* Born in His house, brought up in His family, brought betimes under His law, and yet shaking off the yoke, and bursting the bonds! Did God take me into covenant with Himself when I was a *child*, and look upon me ever since as a covenanter; and yet no sooner have I been able to go, than I have gone from Him; to speak, than I have spoken to His dishonour? Those who are not baptized till years of discretion have no such considerations to humble them

* Ford's Dialogue, ut supra, pp. 51, 52, 54, 55.

for the sinful vanities of childhood and youth as they have who were baptized in their infancy. Let this, therefore, break our heart for the sins of our youth."*

§ 13. Fourth, Was I baptized in *infancy*? Then I have a *superadded* inducement to *dedicate myself* to the Lord. I was dedicated by my parents, and by Thy ministering servant, Lord, and now I would testify my approbation of what they did on my behalf, by *giving up myself*, which is my reasonable service, to Thee as *my Lord* and *my God*. So far am I from questioning the *natural right* of my parents over me, or the *propriety* of their giving up that right to Thee, as the God of *grace*, that I bless Thy name for giving them the opportunity and inclination so to do. I would be thankful that a minister was applied to on the occasion,—that he complied,—that what was thus done on earth was confirmed in heaven,—that my lot was cast among Christians, to whom are committed the oracles of God,—and that my unprofitable life is thus prolonged. What method shall I adopt to express my grateful feelings? "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." I will pay my obligations to the most High, by the aids of His grace, in the best manner I am able. O Lord my God, "I bless Thee for my creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for Thine inestimable love in the redemption of our world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace," and particularly my *infant baptism*, by which I was dedicated to Thy mercy, protection, and service, "and for the hope of glory. And I beseech Thee give me that due sense of all Thy mercies," and especially that holy ordinance whereby I was initiated as a member of Thy Church, "that my heart may be unfeignedly thankful; and that I may shew forth Thy praise, not only with my lips, but in my life, by *giving up myself* to Thy service, and by walking before Thee in holiness and righteousness all my days, through Jesus Christ my Lord."

§ 14. Fifth, Was I baptized in *infancy*? What an *additional* obligation and motive to cultivate universal

* Treatise on Baptism, p. 197-199; or p. 1188, as above.

holiness! Shall I embrace and cherish now, what was so long ago and ever since prohibited? Shall I not "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh," seeing these things are contrary to the order, peace, and harmony of the house in which I was brought up? Have I from a *child* borne the name of Christ? Is not this a great *honour*? Let me, then, detest everything which has the least tendency to discredit so honorable a connexion. Having been *brought up* in the house of God, shall I forget that *holiness* becometh it for ever? Having been brought up in a palace, the Church of the living God, which He hath built for the house of His kingdom, by the might of His unrivalled power, and for the honor of His glorious majesty; and shall I embrace dunghills? Was I pointed out by name, while an infant, as an *intended servant* of the King of glory; and shall I now rest satisfied with a state of bondage to sin and Satan? Was I then, so betimes, *called* to holiness; and shall I continue still under this destructive vassalage? Was I, when a helpless infant, guilty and polluted, adopted by my heavenly Father, *in the intent* that sin might not have dominion over me; that I might be in the way of holiness and happiness; and shall not this be a motive for me to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*?

"Is Israel a servant? is he a home-born slave? why is he spoiled?" Am I a child, brought up in God's house; why then am I so destitute of holiness? Where is the robe of righteousness, the garment of salvation, and the beauty of holiness? This is the *proper* dress of the family. Whence came I, then, to be "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked?" This is not the fault of my heavenly Father, and His house is well-furnished with every needful supply. O my soul, "hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee,

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saith the Lord God of hosts. For *of old time* I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands. I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed : how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? saith the Lord? How canst thou say, I am not polluted? . . . Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth? Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you." Turn, O my soul, from the forbidden and dangerous paths of sin, to the King's high road of holiness; and the rather *because* there thou hast been placed, and oughtest to have walked, from the beginning. Return, O prodigal, to the holy rules and precious privileges of thy Father's house; and the rather *because* it is the house of thy *infancy*. The holy God is the God of thy infancy; the Holy Saviour is the Saviour of thy infancy; the holy Church is the house of thy infancy; the holy angels are the guards of thy infancy; and thy holy baptism was a solemn and express entrance on all these holy relations and connexions. Wherefore, let *holiness to the Lord* be my *motto*, resulting from my baptism; and let the consideration of my *infant baptism* give it a peculiar emphasis and powerful influence on my mind.

§ 15. Sixth, Was I privileged with Christian baptism in my *infancy*? Then let me improve my privilege for more exemplary *diligence*. "As we are Christians, we have not only temptations to be resisted, and sins to be avoided, but work to be done; great and necessary work, for God, and our souls, and eternity. Now nothing can more quicken us to that work than a lively sense of our relation to the Lord Jesus Christ as His servants: 'Truly I am thy servant,' (Ps. cxvi. 16.) To maintain that sense, and to excite us to an answerable *diligence* in our duty, we should frequently consider our baptism; especially our *infant baptism*. . . . Our baptism, as administered in infancy, doth very much strengthen the engagement; and may help to quicken our dulness, and put us forward, when we begin to loiter. . . . If our engagements to Him had been only the result of our own choice, we might have been only the result of our own choice, we might have been tempted to think that a recantation

would dissolve the obligation ; but we are the Lord's by a *former dedication*." God is our kind master :—" Kind indeed, who would take us into His family, and admit us to the protection, provision, and privileges of His family, when we were incapable of doing Him any actual service. Being now grown up, this consideration should quicken us to a double *diligence* : that we may redeem the time lost when we were children, and make some grateful returns to our generous Master for the *early* tokens of His good-will. ' When Israel was a *child*, then I loved him,' (Hos. xi. 1;) and shall not we then study what we shall render for that love?"* How long have I been in my Divine Master's house and service, and yet how little have I improved my invaluable privileges, and how imperfectly discharged incumbent duty! May the quantity of time lost make me the more careful of the remainder. May the consideration of the length of road which I have travelled in departing from God, make me the more diligent now I am brought back to the King's highway.

§ 16. (*Third*.) The baptism of infants may afford us, considered as PARENTS, many devout and profitable reflections. Am I a *parent*? Then let me improve baptism : to increase my *thankfulness* to God, for admitting my children to partake of it with myself,—to testify my *desire of benefiting* my children,—to influence my *prayers* for them,—to assist me in promoting their *salvation*, their knowledge of that gospel which baptism seals, their faith and repentance, holiness and happiness,—to inculcate on them Christian *tempers*, relative *duties*, and a *conversation* becoming the gospel of Christ.

§ 17. First, Is my child admitted to baptism? Then let me improve the happy occasion to increase my *thankfulness* to God. Is the Lord a covenant God, through a Mediator, to *any* of the children of men? This is a subject of pleasing wonder. But is He a covenant God to *me*? This calls for my warmest returns of faith, love, and thanksgiving. Faith in the covenant promise, love

* Henry's Treatise on Baptism, pp. 189, 191, 192; or, pp. 1186, 1187, as above.

to the Divine Promiser, and thanksgiving for the invaluable contents. Yet this wonderful condescension, great as it is, does not express the whole of the Divine liberality. My covenant God is also the God of my *children*: "I will be a God to *thee* and to thy *seed*." "I will be a God to *thee*," says Jehovah. "Wonder at His condescending goodness. Whence is this to me, a worthless worm of the earth! so mean, so vile, and yet taken into covenant with God! interested in the Lord of glory, His attributes, His promises! 'Who am I, O Lord God!' (2 Sam. vii. 18.) That God should take any notice of me, should shew me any token for good, is wonderful, considering how undeserving, how ill-deserving I am; but that He should communicate His favors in a covenant way, interpose Himself for security, make Himself a debtor to His own truth, is such a paradox of love as challengeth everlasting wonder and praise. . . . Let this be the burden of every song of praise, 'To perform the mercy promised, and to remember his holy covenant.' (Luke i. 72.)"* The same infallible lips further add, "I will be a God to *thy seed*." Were these words written for the sake of the Jewish Church only, or for the Christian Church also? Doubtless for the Christian Church, and for the Christian parent also. How can I avoid being thankful for the Divine grant, as extending to my *child* with myself? I cannot help regarding what is a privilege to *this*, as matter of thankful praise from me on its behalf. How can it be otherwise? for my child is a part of myself, not only in the estimation of a fond parent, but by the laws of God and men; by the concurrent suffrage of nature and of nations. Excellent are the following remarks of Mr Henry, for the transcribing of which there needs no apology to the reader:—"Much of the mercy of having children lies in this, that we have them to devote to God; not only a seed to be accounted to *us*, but 'to be accounted to the Lord for a generation,' (Ps. xxii. 30;) not only to honor us, and to bear up our names, but to honor God, and to bear up His name in the world. What is an estate or office good for, but to glorify God

* Henry's Treatise on Baptism, pp. 133. 234; or, p. 1195, as above.

with it, and that we may have something to lay out and use for His honor? Bless God that He hath not only given you a child, but that He hath invited and encouraged you to give it to Him again, and is pleased to accept of it. Be thankful that you have a child admitted, from its birth, into the bosom of the *Church*, and under the wing of the Divine Majesty. Hannah had been long barren, and it was her great grief; at length God gave her a Samuel; but it doth not appear that his birth was so much the matter of her praise, as his *dedication* to the Lord. When she had brought him, in his infancy, to the tabernacle, then it was that she said, 'My soul rejoiceth in the Lord,' (1 Sam. i. 28, ii. 1.) You have more reason to be thankful that you have a child born to inherit the *privileges of the covenant*, than if you had a child born to inherit the largest estate." "Bless God that He hath erected His tabernacle and sanctuary in the midst of us; and hath not left *Himself* without witness, nor *us* without the means of grace and salvation. He hath not dealt so with many other nations, (they and theirs are *afar off*;) and should not this make us very thankful?" "Rightly understand the nature and intention of the ordinance, and you will say with wonder and praise, 'This is no other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven: this gate of the Lord into which the righteous shall enter.' Enter into it therefore with *thanksgiving*, and into His courts with *praise*." "Your children are polluted, but bless God that there is a *fountain opened*, not only for the House of David, but for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, (Zech. xiii. 1.) Draw water, therefore, with joy out of these *wells of salvation*. Rejoice that there is such a covenant, which you can, through grace, lay any claim to. The expressions of joy and rejoicing *at the baptism of a child*, should be turned into this channel; and should terminate in God, and in the new covenant."*

Is my *child* baptized? Oh, what shall I render to the Lord for the seal of His covenant to me and *mine*? To *us* are given, to *us* are sealed, exceeding great and precious

* THE WORKS ON BAPTISM, pp. 235, 236, 238; or, pp. 1195, 1196, as above.

promises. "The hearts of parents, *in that action*, should be affected," one observes, "with abundance of joy and comfort; looking upon that day as a day of their children's espousals to Jesus Christ; and, by consequence, a day that should be more joyful to a godly parent than the day of their marriage to the best earthly matches that can possibly be desired. If a parent should live to see all his children well married, he would say, and well he might, (as to the outward condition of his posterity,) 'What a happy man am I that have lived long enough to see all my children so well disposed of!' But I tell all parents that fear God, that the days in which their children are *baptized* are far joyfuller days than the days of their marriage (if it might so come to pass) to so many of the most potent and mighty princes in the world. And thou that hast seen all thy children baptized, hast lived long enough to see them ten thousand times better bestowed. Thou hast espoused them to Christ, and He hath made them a jointure beyond the abilities of all the monarchs in the world; and therefore write down the days of your children's *baptism* as their *wedding-days*; and as often as you have occasion to remember them, remember it is your duty to rejoice in the Lord, and bless Him on that account."*

§ 18. Second, As a *parent*, let me use and improve the Christian ordinance of baptism, to testify my *desire of benefiting* my infant child. I would consider baptism in the light of a *benefit conferred*, rather than that of a *duty performed*. To think otherwise would lead me to a *radical* mistake. Nor should I consider the baptism of an *adult* in any other light. The baptism even of *such*, properly considered, is a *privilege received*, not a *debt discharged*. It is our *duty to receive a gift*, only in an *indirect* sense; but it is *directly* our *privilege*. It would be the *duty* of my child, were he adult, to *receive* any advantageous offer *remotely*, but his *privilege*, in the most *direct* sense: consequently, baptism, which in its proper nature is, demonstrably, a *blessing* or benefit, has nothing to do with the *duty* of the subject of it *directly*,

* Ford's Dialogue, ut supra, part ii., p. 92.

but *remotely*. For, as he may be *benefited* by an estate or legacy, *without* any supposition of dutiful *compliance*, because such an act of benefiting has no *immediate* concern with duty; in like manner, he may be benefited by baptism, as a Divine grant. And yet the very same thing which in its own nature is a *beneficial grant*, be it what it may, *does not* require of an infant any dutiful compliance, but of an adult *does* require it. Which shews that *compliance* or submission, in reference to a beneficial grant, is but a *mere accident* of the subject, but not an *essential* qualification; but still, when any, who have a liberty and right of choosing, embrace what is in itself beneficial, they act *dutifully*, and *vice versa*. Thus it was, for instance, with respect to circumcision.

If the *direct* notion of baptism be that of a *benefit* granted by Jehovah to *me and mine*, like the precious promise it seals, it clearly follows, that their want of understanding and voluntary acceptance is no just bar to its application. Wherefore, how can I discharge the duty of a parent, who impartially consults the welfare of his child, if I withhold from it what is divinely bequeathed to it in common with myself? I am desired to consult the good of my children, by bringing them up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" this shews that the *means* of this nurture and admonition, the *rules* of Christian discipline and instruction, the sacred oracles, are *intended for their use*. How, then, can I, in justice to my trust, appropriate to them the contents of the instrument sealed, but withhold from them, without any forfeiture on their part, the *seal*, of which they are as capable as myself? Does God ever say, *Baptism* is not to your infant children though the *promise* is to them? If He does not tear off the seal from His *will* concerning them, nor requires me to do it, why should I do it? Instead of putting my fancy to the rack for some excepting clause, whereby they may be deprived of the baptismal benefit, let me thankfully acknowledge the loving-kindness of the Lord in putting such a painful discovery out of my power, and even out of the power of all those who most zealously attempt it. Let me not be ashamed to do

this act of kindness to my child, even in the great congregation, if thought most convenient. God is not ashamed to be called *its God*; Christ is not ashamed to say, "Suffer it to come, or to be brought to me, and forbid it not;" and shall I be ashamed or backward to own that honorable relation, that advantageous approach? Is Christ willing to take it as a lamb to His fold, a member to His Church; and shall I, to whom it is a second-self, of whom it is, as it were, a part,—shall I *alone* negative the gracious motion? I cannot, and, without an authority which I have not discovered, I will not: but will say, encouraged by so many rational, scriptural, irresistible motives, before the world, before the Church, and in the presence of professed opposers—"Behold, Lord, here I am, and the child, or children, Thou hast graciously given me. What Thou grantest to my offspring, I desire as a faithful steward not to deprive them of, but faithfully and cheerfully to appropriate for the intended use."

§ 19. Third, Am I the *parent* of a baptized child, or children? How should their visible relation to Christ and His Church influence my *prayers* for them! Though morally polluted, yet relatively they are not unclean, but *holy*. According to the will of Christ, I have given up my natural right in them, and over them, to the God of grace. They are dedicated to Father, Son, and Spirit, that they may be in *every respect* what Christianity requires them to be. They are such as the Lord my God hath *called*; and their calling is a high and holy calling. May I command nothing, require nothing, endure nothing, and do nothing, unworthy of such a relation and holy calling! Lord, teach and assist me to bring them up *as Christians*, in Thy nurture and admonition. They having been discipled and baptized, may I be found diligent and successful in "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Thou hast commanded us!" Oh, what precious promises are sealed to them! May they have an early and saving acquaintance with these promises! Oh that they may speedily know the things freely given them of our covenant God! May no back-

wardness or neglect on my part keep them in ignorance of the things sealed to them, or foster a criminal indifference! Various and important are the blessings and obligations exhibited in baptism, as we have seen, (Chap. II., § 15-21.) Oh that *every one* of these blessings were actually possessed, and every obligation, according to their capacities, were discharged, by my dear children!

Mighty Saviour! I would make my supplication unto Thee, in behalf of *every child* Thou hast graciously given me, with the faith and importunity of the woman of Canaan (Matt. xv.) in behalf of her daughter, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my child (this child and the *other*) labors under the guilt, pollution, disease, and tyranny of sin, without Thy help. Lord, help me. I cannot doubt of Thy *power*, nor while Thy word, Thy oath, Thy sacred seal stand uncanceled, can I doubt of Thy *willingness* to save to the uttermost all that come to Thee. I do not ground my supplications on the worthiness of myself or mine, but on Thy *free grant* of covenant favours. This my faith would rest upon. Were I to admit and plead this free grant actually made to my children, and yet not baptize them, I should be guilty of a criminal solecism in my Christian profession. I should then *mutilate* the gift of God, and *withhold more than is meet*, which would tend to *impoverish* the legatees, the Church of Christ, and probably my own soul. I have therefore admitted Thy covenant gift in its full extent; and received both the instrument and the seal in faith. Now, Lord, help me to make them acquainted with their privileges and obligations. By Thy Holy Spirit bless my endeavours, and command success. Are we the objects of the promise, the rich blessings of the new covenant, and yet neither free, holy, nor happy, but the reverse? Surely, then, we are not straitened in Christ, nor in His gospel, but we are straitened in our own bowels. Oh that, for a recompence in the same, we, as the children of the covenant, may be also enlarged! (2 Cor. vi. 11-13.)

Compassionate Saviour! I bring my children unto Thee, who hast said, "Suffer the little children to come

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unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." Take them up in Thy arms of mercy, and bless them. Thine they were, Thou gavest them me, and hast made them partakers of the covenant means of grace; oh, receive them under Thy special protection and guidance, make them the subjects of the grace of these means, which it is Thy will they should enjoy!

"The sealing of the covenant in general, as a token of God's good-will to our seed, is a sufficient handle for *faith* to take hold on, in *praying* for our children. I see not how those parents can with equal confidence pray for their children, who deny them to be in covenant, and so set them upon even ground with the children of infidels."* No *prayer* for a blessing is acceptable but the prayer of *faith*; no *blessing* can be prayed for in faith but what is *promised*; to have a promise is to have a *covenant* grant; wherefore, I can *consistently* pray for my children *in faith*, no further than I allow them an interest in the gospel *covenant*,—that is to say, that the administration and economical *privileges* of mercy appertain to them, and consequently baptism; nor should anything be deemed a bar to the enjoyment of them, but incapability or a criminal rejection. But they neither criminally reject, nor are incapable; consequently, the covenant and its seal terminate and rest upon them, and in warding off *any part* of what was thus intended for their use, I must be blame-worthy. How can I plead in *faith* promised mercy, while I deny to them the *token* of mercy? If baptism, the *token*, be not theirs, neither is *promised* mercy theirs; and if the latter be not theirs, *faith* has no foundation in reference to their happiness. *Hidden counsels* do not *testify* or assert any particular truth to me concerning my child. Through grace, I can think, with adoring complacency, of myself and mine being in the hand of a sovereign God; but the *sovereignty* of God, *predestination*, *eternal* covenant interest, *particular* redemption, and the *distinguishing* application of grace, are not the objects of gospel faith, properly and directly. As far indeed as they are *testified* of in revelation as

* Henry's Treatise on Baptism, p. 242.

facts, which are only *general*, so far, and no further, faith regards them. While unexplained, and therefore in the class of *secret things*, they belong to *God*; whereas the things which are *revealed*, and these *only*, belong to me and my children. The *arcana* of the Divine government neither are, nor in the nature of things can be, either the *objects* of my *faith*, or the *rules* of my *duty*. In short, they are not, they cannot be, the foundation of the PRAYER OF FAITH. Take away the plea of *covenant interest*, and faith is struck *dumb*. Take away *covenant promises*, and faith is struck *blind*. Take away *covenant faithfulness*, and faith has no *standing*. But, blessed be Thy name, O Lord my God, my children's *covenant interest* is founded on Thy *testimony*, and remains indisputable; therefore I can *plead in faith*; Thy precious *promises* are directed to *each* by name, as a covenantee, and therefore I may *view in faith* Thy merciful designs towards them; Thy *faithfulness* was never known to fail, it *cannot* fail, and therefore the *heirs of promise* may have strong consolation, *faith* having two immutable things to stand upon—the *promise* and the *oath* of that God who *cannot lie*. Lord increase my faith; and bless my children with the saving knowledge of Thy covenant! Amen.

§ 20. Fourth, Am I the *parent* of baptized children? Let me improve their baptism for their *conversion* and *salvation*. That baptism may be considered as a moral means of conversion, faith, and repentance, is evident hence: if the *gospel* be so, *baptism* is—except we maintain a self-evident absurdity, that the heavenly *charter* has one use and tendency, and the *seal* of that charter another. And with respect to *infants*, it is as much so, at least, as *any other* part of the gospel dispensation can be. If salvation being come to a house lays all the members of the family under obligations of receiving that salvation, as they are or become capable, that exhibited salvation may be justly termed a *means* of conversion. In like manner, the seal which authenticates that salvation in the most unequivocal form must be equally entitled to the same if not a superior rank. Not to say,

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that it is *matter of fact* that infant baptism has been frequently so owned. And, indeed, it appears to me that it would be unaccountably strange if otherwise. If the *instrument* sealed be deserving of credit, or a means of faith, must not the *seal itself*, the broad seal of heaven, be considered in the same light? Here observe—

(1.) Our children, as the children of the covenant, and baptized, have a *peculiar right* to the MEANS of conversion. To illustrate and confirm this point, let the following remarks be considered:—"The *oracles of God* were committed to the Jews, and this upon the account of circumcision. They were a people that were solemnly and *sacramentally* the Lord's, and God commits His oracles to them. He *permitted* them to others *providentially*; but He *committed* them to the Jews *federally*, as the law of the kingdom He would govern them by. They owed their Bible to circumcision. God's covenant was in their flesh, and therefore God instructed them with the *instrument* in which it was drawn up. It is clear that the oracles of God (that pure law which, as David saith, *converts* the soul, Ps. xix. 7) are the *portion* of a people in covenant with God. Our infants, therefore, being according to our principles, in covenant with God, are *entitled* to the Bible, and all the contents thereof. Add to this, the *ministers*, the dispensers of this Word, are, upon the account of *church-membership, theirs*, with all their gifts, graces, and labours. Pastors and teachers are set up *in the Church*, (1 Cor. xii. 28,) and given to *them* as a peculiar fruit of Christ's ascension, (Eph. iv. 12.) God's husbandmen are set over His *own enclosure*, His shepherds over His *own flock*, and His builders over His *own building*. If any persons, therefore, be 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,' no members of the Church, lie common with the rest of the world, shut out of this enclosure, be not sheep of this fold, no stones in this building,—however God may *providentially* extend the benefits of His ministers' labours to such persons, yet they can claim no *covenant right* or title to any spiritual advantage from them. But our children, even from infancy, by our principles, are entitled by a *covenant*

right to all those precious emoluments which accrue therefrom. To which I may add, *private means* of conversion, to which there are promises made. That *nouthesia Kurion*, the 'nurture of the Lord,' of which the apostle speaks, *instruction* and *correction*, as ordinances of God, and all the promises made unto them, are not to be extended beyond the Church, as to the benefit that may be *expected* from them.

"But may not a godly parent of an Aanabaptistical judgment obtain that blessing upon his labours in the education of his child, whether his child be [deemed] in covenant with him or no, baptized or unbaptized? I deny not but he may. For the mercy of God to His people is many times larger than their faith or prayers. So that God may look upon those children as in covenant with Him, and deal with them as such, whom their parents deny Him a [visible] title to. God may, and I doubt not doth many times *remember* the covenant which they sinfully *forget*; and does them good upon the account thereof, when they *never plead* it.

"But, can it be supposed that ordinances should be so visibly *ineffectual* upon such numbers of those to whom they and the blessings of them do peculiarly belong? No wonder at all that it should be so. The apostle answers this very objection, in my judgment, in the case of the Jews, and their ordinances, Rom. iii. 3. When he had spoken concerning the *peculiar right* of the Jews to the oracles of God, (ver. 2,) he saw the objection that might thence be started: But how came it to pass that so many of them were never the better for them? The apostle answers this objection thus: 'What if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect?' The *privilege* of the Jews, in the enjoyment of ordinances, was continued to the Church by God's faithfulness. So that though divers of them perished under them through *unbelief*, yet God's covenant in the vouchsafement of them was entire and unbroken notwithstanding. In like manner, I may say concerning the *children of Pædobaptists*, their *privilege* in the peculiar right they have to converting ordinances is not at all

impaired by the inefficacy of those ordinances upon any, or any number of them. It is their *privilege* to enjoy them, and it will be the *aggravation of their guilt* that they do not improve them. And although they have a peculiar right to the blessing of ordinances, as well as the ordinances themselves, yet because this right is, as the covenant is that derives it, *external*, it becomes ineffectual to many, through their own neglect of seeking to God in His own way for the obtaining thereof. Besides, to the shame of many of us it may be spoken, divers parents among us do not *understand*, and others, out of dissatisfaction as to their covenant interest, *dare* not, or through sinful neglect *do* not, plead with God for their children [and with their children for God] as they have sufficient warrant to do.

“And here I shall ask you a question concerning *promises of conversion*: To whom, think you, do such promises belong? To those *within* the Church, or those that are *without* it? An alien from the commonwealth of Israel is also a stranger to the covenants of promise, (Eph. ii. 12,) and so no promise of the covenant *belongs* to any one that is not a church-member. Be, then, yourself judge whether the principles that exclude infants of believing [i.e., Christian] parents out of covenant with God, and out of all church-relation, or those that admit them to both, give the more comfortable hopes of conversion to them. We say that they are not only under a *providential capacity* of conversion, as mere heathens are, but they are under a *covenant capacity*, because within that number to whom the promise of renewing grace belong.

“But, are there not promises of *converting grace* made to the *heathen* world? How, then, can it be true that promises of converting grace belong only to church members? Very well; except you can make it appear that those scriptures come under the *proper notion* of promises made to them who are the persons mentioned in them. For my part, I look on them rather as *prophecies* of the conversion of the Gentiles than promises; or, if *promises*

at all, yet promises directed to the Jews *concerning* the Gentiles.

"I have something more to say concerning the *prayers of the Church*. Are the prayers of the Church any *means* tending to the furtherance of *conversion*, or no? Yes, undoubtedly; for if the effectual prayer of *one* righteous man avail much, if it be fervent, as James saith, surely the prayers of *many* righteous men, *assembled in Christ's name*, must needs be far *more prevalent*. Although the Church pray for *all men* according to the command, (1 Tim. ii. 1,) yet those that are *most upon their hearts* in their prayers are those of the *same flock and fold* with themselves. Accordingly, I make no question, but that in the inmost desires of all true Christians the conversion of those that are *nearest* related, whether in natural or *Christian* bonds, is most passionately wished for; and, by consequence, the little ones born in the Church, the hope of the derivation of Christ's kingdom to succeeding generations. So that those principles that will not allow such persons a standing in the Church, do what they can to disinterest them in the very *cream and marrow* of the whole Church's prayers."*

On the whole, I would observe concerning the *external means of conversion*, that there is a certain *order* of means, divinely instituted, whereby our *desires* and our *endeavors* ought to be *regulated*. By a presumptuous disregard of this *order*, we are in danger of *tempting* God. For instance, if the *conversion of the heathen* be the subject, order requires that the *first step* in our prayers and attempts should be that God, by His *providence*, would open an entrance, an effectual door, for His gospel to be sent to them in purity and power; that the Lord would convert them by sending them first the *means* of conversion. A *second step* in order is, that a dispensation of mercy may be *established* among them; that they may be brought into a church-state, and have the ministration of the word and ordinances as a *people*. A *third gradation* which divinely-instituted order requires is, that we

* Ford's Dialogue, part ii. pp. 38-49.

desire the *grace* of the means may be communicated, and that souls may be converted to God, made to receive Christ, justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. This order is beautifully described by St. Paul: "Whosoever shall *call* upon the name of the Lord shall be *saved*. How then shall they *call* on him in whom they have not *believed*? and how shall they *believe* in him of whom they have not *heard*? and how shall they *hear* without a *preacher*? and how shall they *preach* except they be *sent*?" (Rom. x. 13-15.) He does not, I apprehend, argue the absolute impossibility of salvation to any but in this exact mode, but he shews which is the *appointed plan of means* which we are to regard. In like manner, if the *conversion of our children* be the subject, order requires that we should *first* desire and use our influence in bringing them into a *church-state*. They are born under a dispensation of grace; in *that respect* they are not *unclean*, but *holy*; nothing but our avowed rejection of Christianity can deprive them of that privilege. But none can be deemed of the *visible Church* regularly without *initiation* by baptism. This is the instituted porch to the temple of means. To desire and make use of *subsequent* means, while that which is *initiatory* is not used, is *irregular* and presumptuous. A *second step* in the Divine plan is, that I should seek from the God of means a blessing *in their use*: the conversion of my children *as partakers* of the means, and not *without* them. For me to desire grace for my child for conversion, and yet deny him any of the *means* of grace of which he is a capable subject, is unscriptural, disorderly, and preposterous. As, therefore, I desire his *conversion*, let me observe the *order of means* leading thereto; and oh that I may never be found remiss, while *using* the means, in seeking their *end*! And that the important end of *conversion* may be regularly sought, and is peculiarly favored by *infant baptism*, will further appear, if we observe—

§ 21. (2.) That the practice of baptizing infants (*coet. par.*) may furnish a parent with many *convincing* considerations and arguments, in pleading with his child with

a view to his conversion, which otherwise he could not so well urge.

“My dear child,” may he say, “thou art a sinner from thy birth, guilty and polluted. This thy baptism teaches, In baptism, God shews and testifies that He will forgive sins; and this is one reason why thou hast been baptized, because thou art a sinner, standing in need of spiritual washing. Thou art not to think that the water of baptism takes away sin, that is, pardons and makes thee pure in soul; no, no, it only shews thee plainly that thou *wantest* this pardon and purity; and it also shews, that God is merciful and willing to give thee every good thing in this life and in the world to come, on thy coming to Him. He says in His *word*, that He will give grace and glory,—that those who seek Him early, that is, when young as thou art, shall find Him; and Christ says He will in no wise cast out any poor sinner that cometh to Him. But thy baptism shews *still more plainly* that thou art guilty, and that God is merciful; that thou art impure, that is, unfit to go to heaven, but that God is willing, on thy coming to Him, to cleanse thee and to make thee meet for heaven. My dear child, learn this, and strive to understand it without delay. If thou diest without repentance—how shall I speak it?—thou must perish for ever. No one goes to heaven without pardon, and thou must not expect to go there without repentance. And, oh, remember that not only the Bible, the Sabbaths, the sermons, the prayers, and the advices thou hast from me and others, will rise up against thee, if thou continuest impenitent, but also thy *baptism*, in the day of judgment.

“Observe again, my dear child; though you go with me to worship the great and good God, to His house of prayer on the Lord’s day,—and though you are always present at our family devotion,—though you never take the holy name of God in vain, as many naughty children do, nor do of a Sabbath-day as they do; yet this is not enough to give you a title to heaven. This is very good in its place; as also to honour your parents, to behave properly to your superiors, school-mates, and all people.

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‘To order yourself lowly and reverently to all your betters; to hurt nobody in word or deed; to be true and just in all your dealings; to bear no malice nor hatred in your heart; to keep your hands from picking and stealing; and your tongue from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering.’ These things, I say, are very right. But the best of men do them very imperfectly; and except we have a better title to heaven than this, we can by no means be saved. Now, observe, because we could not keep God’s holy law perfectly, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to keep it perfectly in our stead, that by our believing in Him we should not perish, but have everlasting life. This your baptism teaches; for St. Paul says, that to be baptized into Christ, signifies to *put on* Christ,—that is, that He is our worthiness, our perfection, our righteousness. This is one of those very important truths that your baptism testifies and seals. Oh, then, my dear child, bring thy poor perishing self to Jesus Christ! He will not put thee off, for He has declared He won’t. He went through every state, from infancy to manhood; and having been a child Himself when in the world, He receives children. Oh the happiness he has to give! He will not only keep thee from hell, but at death take thee to heaven. He alone can make thee truly good; I cannot. Nobody on earth can. But Jesus Christ, being Himself divinely good and gracious, can make us good; yes, He can and will make thee so, on coming to Him with all thy heart. This thou mayest be as sure of as that thou art baptized. For baptism according to the will of Christ is a seal for confirmation. You know, my dear, that what an *honest man* confirms by *sealing* it, he will stand by. Much more so will our gracious Lord and Saviour. Sensible of thy sinful and helpless condition, with the assistance of Divine grace, and with a contrite heart, pray unto this merciful Redeemer in some such words as these:—‘O Lord God, who alone canst save me from sin and the wrath to come, accept the prayers and the cries of a helpless child. No one on earth or in heaven but Thyself, O Lord most merciful, can help me. I am destroyed

by sin, the *sin of my heart* especially, but my help is from Thee. Accept me in Christ, whose nature and life were perfectly holy, and who is made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to all Thy children. Oh that as I have been baptized with water, I may also be baptized with the Holy Ghost! And as this was signified and sealed by my baptism, grant it me, O Lord God, for Christ's sake. Amen.'"

§ 22. Fifth, Am I the *parent* of baptized children? Then let me improve their baptism, for the purpose of inculcating upon them Christian *tempers*. Let me remind them, that to answer the great ends of our baptism is the same as to be *true Christians*; to have that mind which was in Christ Jesus, a disinterested, humble, loving, and liberal disposition; to live and walk as He would have them, by faith and not by sense. Baptism, like Christianity itself, points them to a penitent frame of mind; to a resolute opposition, by grace, to youthful lusts and the whole body of sin; to heavenly-mindedness and firm attachment to Christ. (See Chap. II., §§ 18—21.)

§ 23. Sixth, As a *parent* let me improve the baptism of my children for the purpose of promoting in them a due regard to *relative* duties. As their baptism introduces them into a state of *new relationship*, it requires answerable duties. As baptized ones, as Christians in name and calling, let me often remind them of the apostolic exhortations, which are often founded on the same consideration. Let them be exhorted to be meek and peaceable, and even to follow peace with all men, as well as holiness; to do good to all as they have opportunity, and especially the most serious and deserving. And oh, with the bowels of a parent, with the integrity, watchfulness, concern, and impartiality of a Christian, let me look diligently, as far as in me lies, "lest any of them fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness, springing up, breed trouble and defile others;" lest there be any revengeful Cain, immodest Ham, profane Esau, or proud Absalom. And let me enforce all duties, and especially *relative* ones, from the apostle Paul's grand consideration, (Heb. xii. 22-25:)—That, in visibility and

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covenant-relation, "they are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the *general assembly* and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to [the same *general relation* with] the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." In a word, may I improve their baptism to promote a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ.

§ 24. (*Fourth*,) Am I a minister of the gospel? How should I *dread* the thought of withholding water from those whom Christ owns as the subjects of His kingdom; how *ready* to benefit those who are so capable and suitable subjects of such a benefit; with what *solemnity* discharge this branch of ministerial commission; with what *closeness*, plainness, and fidelity. address, on this occasion, the parents of the baptized child; how, in improving infant baptism, *concur* with parents, for the aforementioned purposes, in private and public!

§ 25. First, How should I *dread* the thought of withholding water from those whom Christ owns as the subjects of His kingdom! Let me remember, that Christ severely *rebuked* His disciples for their keeping of little children from being *brought to Him*. Are they not as *capable* of the main end of baptism as the Jewish infants were of the principal design of circumcision? Do they not answer the scriptural requisition of necessary qualifications, such as are perfectly *suitable* to the nature and design of Christian baptism? If so, I am not guiltless while I keep out of Christ's fold, as far as in me lies, those whom He is willing to receive as the lambs of His visible flock.*

* "Some pious persons professedly declare that they dare not baptize an infant upon a dogmatical faith in the parents, and I cannot but profess that, being fairly called to it, I should *tremble at the guilt* of refusing it. I should as soon be brought to strip them of their *houses or inheritances*, devolved upon them from such parents, to take the bread out of their mouths, as to debar them of this their *birth-privilege*."—*Mr Thomas Blake, in a Preface to Dr. Ford's Dialogue concerning the Practical Use of Infant Baptism.*

§ 26. Second, How *ready* should I be to benefit those who are thus qualified, by cheerfully obeying the call to baptize them! When I receive a child into the visible Church, I am not only executing the will and pleasure of Christ, but *imitating* His tender compassion towards children, whom He ever treated as church-members. What readiness should I discover in gathering the lambs with my arms, in bringing them to the arms of my Saviour, and *their* Saviour, who has promised to carry them in His bosom! Delightful task! not only "to rear the tender mind, and teach the young idea how to shoot," but also to *enter* the infant mind into the school of Him who can qualify the youngest child that breathes for heavenly and sublime enjoyments! Pleasing thought! that every time I baptize a child, I am adding to the number of Christ's visible subjects, many of whom, no doubt, are taken to His heavenly kingdom, where alone they can have an opportunity of acknowledging the mercy and faithfulness of their covenant God, and the compassionate care of their Divine Shepherd. And if many of them, growing up, will probably despise their birthright, like profane Esau; or betray (in a sense) their Lord and Master, like ungrateful Judas; or at least wound Him in the house of His friends by their disobedience; yet some, I may cheerfully hope, will be spared, and graciously disposed to speak of the goodness of their heavenly Friend and Lord in the land of the living.

§ 27. Third, Am I as a gospel *minister* called to baptize infants? With what concern and *solemnity* ought I to discharge this branch of my ministerial commission! They are no less the purchase of my Saviour's blood than adults. His behaviour, in taking up infants in His arms to bless them, was marked with solemnity and holy reverence, no less than in preaching the gospel, or even raising the dead. They are no less the objects of the Father's everlasting love, or the subjects of His merciful dispensations than adults. The life and liberty, the misery and happiness, the loss or gain, the privileges and the reverse, of the *infant* part of mankind, are not less momentous than those of the adult, by the laws of

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heaven and earth. Why should not the Christian *divine*, as well as the civil magistrate, the lawyer or the judge, espouse the cause and transact the interesting business of infants with equal concern and solemnity as those of adults? Where the temporal welfare of a child is concerned, men do not say, "It is but the life or death, the property or privilege of an *infant*, therefore it is no matter how the business is done." Wherefore let me regard the covenant privileges of infants as truly *important*, and their baptismal dedication to God, who condescends to be present, sealing to them, His deed of gift, a *solemn service*.

§ 28. Fourth, Am I called to officiate, on such an occasion, as a *minister*? With what *closeness*, plainness, and fidelity, should I address the spectators of the ordinance in general, old and young, and the parents of the baptized child in particular! What an opportunity is here afforded me of making a practical use of the scriptural and interesting doctrines of original sin,—covenant mercy through Christ,—justifying, regenerating, and cleansing grace,—our absolute need of Christ, and the Holy Spirit's influence,—the privilege of adoption into the family of the great and gracious God,—every covenant-blessing therein exhibited, and every obligation thence resulting! What a favorable opportunity of exhorting the parents to bring them up for God, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,—to pray for them, and devote them to Him *constantly*,—to provide for their welfare, not only their temporal but also their eternal welfare, as God, even *their* God, evidently has provided, by His providence and covenant,—to improve, in behalf of their children, as well as for themselves, those means of grace to which baptism is an instituted and explicit introduction,—to stand prepared to resign them, if soon called for by death, without repining;—to consider themselves as under-teachers in the school of Christ, whose pupils are their own children,—to watch over them and study their proficiency, that they may be qualified betimes for the higher class of congregational fellowship.

§ 29. Fifth, As a Christian *minister*, let me embrace

favorable opportunities to *concur* with the parents of baptized children in improving their bapt' sm, in public and private, And is there not a pressing call to this on account of the great ignorance of many Christian parents respecting the very nature and design, blessings and obligations of this Christian rite? I cannot help thinking that were it *rightly understood*, few or none would part with it from a *conscientious* scruple; or make so little use of it as a moral means of promoting real Christianity. Are not Christian families and societies in as great danger of losing sight of the true end of baptism, as Jewish ones were in regard of circumcision and other external rites? Let me therefore endeavor to inform the judgments, and direct the pious efforts of all as I have opportunity, and especially those heads of families with whom I am connected that require most assistance.

§ 30. (*Fifth*.) AS A SPECTATOR of infant baptism, let me not *mock*, lest my bands be made strong, but rather admire the *Divine goodness* towards infants,—*cordially assent* to the solemn obligations my own (if the subject of it) has laid me under,—regard the occasion as a solemn and seasonable *memento*,—wonder at the conduct of such as *tear off the seal* from the Divine charter,—consider how *blessed* those are who partake of the things signified.

§ 31. First, Let me beware of all appearance of irreverence, indecency, and much more of *mockery*. "Now therefore, be ye not mockers," saith the Lord God of hosts, "lest your bands be made strong," (Isa. xxviii. 22.) None but *fools* can be guilty of such things. Nor is the caution useless, seeing it is foretold that the *professors of the last times should be mockers*. (Jude 18.) Such need no other evidence of their being the children of the *bond-woman*. (See Gen. xxi. 9, 10.) "Whispering, and laughing, and other irreverences of behaviour, at this ordinance, are a provocation to God, an affront to the institution, a disturbance to others, and a bad sign of a vain and carnal mind."*

§ 32. Second, Let me admire the *Divine goodness* towards infants. How illustriously do the *sovereignty* of

* Henry's Treatise on Baptism, p. 263.

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His love, the *freeness* of His grace, the *all-sufficiency* of the Redeemer's righteousness *without works*, appear in the baptism of infants! What can they bring to Christ for acceptance? and yet they are received. How helpless, and yet accepted! What an emblem is this child of weakness, want, and unworthiness! and yet Divine goodness does not overlook, nay, the arms of mercy embrace it. How is human merit for ever discountenanced! For greater love and compassion does Jesus possess towards that tender babe than its joyous and fond parents.

§ 33. Third, Am I a *spectator* of this rite, so expressive of human indigence and Divine bounty? so striking a display of the creature's absolute dependence and high privilege? Let me *cordially assent* to the important benefits and solemn obligations which my own (if the favored subject of it) has laid me under. Whether I assent or no, the vows of God are upon me. God's just requisitions are more binding than all the vows in the world beside.

§ 34. Fourth, Am I a *spectator* of this ordinance? How should every such occasion be a solemn and seasonable *memento* respecting human unworthiness and sovereign grace! O my soul, what hast thou to boast of? Remember the rock from whence thou wert hewn: how humbling the thought of thy original! No sooner did I breathe the vital air, than "the seeds of sin sprung up for death." Naturally helpless, (more so than most animals,) and morally defiled, is the most distinguished of mortals. Royal blood is contaminated with sin; all the care and attendance of a palace have no tendency to remove the guilt and pollution even of its infant inhabitant. But, oh the benignity and rich grace of that God whose mercy beams forth not less on the poor cottage than the sumptuous palace! "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even the princes of his people. He

maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord," (Ps. cxliii. 5-9.)

In beholding that infant, let me be reminded *how* the kingdom of heaven is to be received. As a *free gift* bestowed on the *undeserving*. If ever I be admitted into the kingdom of glory, I must enter first into the kingdom of grace. And as the subject of grace I am *passive* in the hand of mercy. How just and holy the *requisition* of the Supreme *Governor*; and yet how beholder to the *sovereignty of grace* if received to celestial bliss! Let me not be ignorant or forgetful of this mystery, "lest I be wise in my own conceit." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways" *of mercy* "past finding out! Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen," (Rom. xi. 33-36.)

§ 35. Fifth, How do they *mutilate* the design of Christianity who *tear off the seal* from the Divine charter! What! do any begrudge to their children and posterity the external evidences with which Christianity is recommended? God condescends to confirm His charter with His seal, as an *additional evidence* to every subject of His kingdom, that He is and will be true and faithful to His word of promise; as a perpetual *motive* and encouragement to turn to God and live. Let me, therefore, never, without a Divine injunction, imitate a conduct which *mutilates* the motives to faith, to repentance, to happiness in a covenant God; as that which denies baptism to children does. Are the following words, in reference to this conduct, too strong?—"If any should set upon a design *to undo all* that by commission from Christ in many nations of the world is happily done, there could not, I believe, a *more ready way* than this be found to effect it; though those that take it in hand are far from any such design in it."* On the contrary, I cannot help

* Blake's Preface to Dr Ford's Dialogue.

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thinking that the following words of Dr Owen, concerning a *weekly day of holy rest (mutatis mutandis)* may be fitly applied to the practice of *infant baptism*:—
 “Amongst all the outward means of conveying to the *present generation* that religion which was at first taught and delivered unto men by Jesus Christ and His apostles, there hath been none more effectual than the catholic uninterrupted observation of such a ” *rite*.*

§ 36. Sixth, How *blessed* are those who participate of the things signified by this ordinance! They are born, not only of *water*, but also of the *Spirit*. They are justified freely by grace, and purified by the blood of Christ. They have the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The covenant of grace, not only in its external administration, but in its internal efficacy, has found them out, and made them the favored recipients of the *subjective* love of the Father, grace of the Son, and fellowship of the Spirit. To have the light of gospel day, and glorious truths exhibited to view, must needs be inestimable privileges; but to receive from the same beneficent, everlasting Source of good, eyes to behold, ears to hear, hands to receive, and a heart to improve these blessings, how inconceivably great the privilege! O Lord, “what is man that thou art *thus* mindful of him? and the son of man that thou *thus* visitest him?” How desirable, then, the BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST! Oh that I may be found the happy, happy subject of it, according to the promise, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost!” May I constantly breathe after this blessing, until the apostolic prayer be answered in me, (Eph. iii. 16–19,) “That he would grant me,” and all His children, “according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith; that I, being rooted and grounded in love,”—love to God who first loved me, and the unfeigned love of the brethren, as well as unlimited benevolence to all man-

* *Exercitations on the Sabbath; Preface, [Edin'burgh Ed., vol. ii. of Exp. of Ep. to the Heb., p. 243.]*

kind—" may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that I might be FILLED WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD." *Amen.*

ADDENDA.

Baptism obliges parents to frequently renew the dedication of their child to God. To begin early to *pray with* the child. To early teach it the nature and meaning of baptism, and its obligations to God. To always bear in mind its consecration and their covenant vows *when deciding* questions of duty in *governing* or *advising* the child. And what is implied on the part of a covenant-keeping God in this ordinance cannot, perhaps, be better expressed than in the words of the celebrated Shepherd of Cambridge to his son : God gave thee the ordinance of baptism, whereby God is become *thy God*, and is *before hand with thee*, so that if thou wilt return to God, he will *undoubtedly receive thee*.—*Dimmick on Baptism, p. 266.*

Matthew Henry says his father drew up a short form of the baptismal covenant for the use of his children. It was this :

‘ I take God the Father to be my chiefest good and highest end.

‘ I take God the Son to be my Prince and Saviour.

• I take God the Holy Ghost to be my Sanctifier, Teacher, Guide, and Comforter.

‘ I do likewise devote and dedicate unto the Lord, my whole self, all I am, all I have, all I can do.

‘ And this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely, and for ever.’

This he taught his children ; and they each of them solemnly repeated it every Lord’s day in the evening after they were catechised, he putting his *Amen* to it ; and sometimes adding, ‘ So say, and so do, and you are made for ever.’

He also took great pains with them to lead them into the understanding of it, and to persuade them to a *free* and *cheerful* consent to it.

He was careful to bring his children betimes, (when they were about sixteen years of age,) to the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, to take the covenant of God upon themselves, and to make their dedication to God their own act and deed ; and a great deal of pains he took with them to prepare them for that great ordinance, and so to translate them into the state of *adult* church membership.

In dealing with his children about their *spiritual* state, he took hold of them very much by the handle of their *infant baptism*, and frequently inculcated upon them that they were born in God’s house, and were betimes dedicated and given up to Him, and therefore were obliged to be his servants.—Psalm cxvi. 16. I am thy servant, because the son of thine handmaid.”—*Life of Philip Henry.*

Circumcision was appointed as the distinctive badge of the covenant, [made with Abraham] because it was peculiarly fitted for symbolically expressing the spiritual character and design of the covenant. It marked the condition of every one who received it, as having to do with higher powers and objects than those of corrupt nature, as the condition of one brought into blessed *fellowship* with God, and therefore called to walk before Him and be perfect. There would be no difficulty in perceiving this, nor any material difference of opinion upon the subject, if people would but look beneath the surface, and in the true spirit of the ancient religion, would contemplate the outward as an image of the inward. The general purport of the covenant was, that from Abraham there was to be generated a seed of blessing, in which all real blessing was to centre, and from which it was to flow to the ends of the earth. To shew that this end was to be reached, not as the result of nature's ordinary productiveness, but of nature *purged of uncleanness—nature raised above itself, in league with the grace of God, and bearing on it the distinctive impress of His character and working*, God affixed to the covenant this symbolical rite. It said to the circumcised man, that he had Jehovah for his bridegroom, to whom he had become espoused, as it were, by blood, and that he must no longer follow the unregulated will and impulse of nature, but live in accordance with the high relation he occupied, and the sacred calling he had received.

Most truly, therefore, does the apostle say, that Abraham received circumcision, as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, —Rom. iv., 11., a divine token in his own case that he had attained through faith to such fellowship with God, and righteousness in him —and a token for every child that should afterwards receive it, not indeed that he actually possessed the same, but that he was called to possess it, and had a right to the privileges and hopes which might enable him to attain the possession. Most truly also does the apostle say in another place, Rom. ii., 28-29. He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, (i.e., not a Jew in the right sense, not such an one as God would recognize and own) &c. The very design of the covenant was to secure a seed with those inward and spiritual characteristics [declared in this passage] and the sign of the covenant, the outward impression in the flesh was worthless, excepting in so far as it was the expression of the corresponding reality. Isaac the child of promise, in his being and birth, was emphatically a child of God. And thus was the exact type of what the covenant properly aimed at, and what its expressive symbol betokened, viz., a *spiritual seed*, in which the divine and human, grace and nature, should meet together in producing true subjects and channels of blessing. But its actual representation—the one complete and perfect embodiment of all it symbolized and sought, was the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the divine and the human met from the first, not in co-operative merely, but organic union, and consequently the result produced was a Being free from all taint of corruption, holy, harmless, undefiled, the express image of the Father, the very righteousness of God. He alone fully realized the conditions of blessing exhibited in the covenant, and was

qualified to be in the largest sense, the seed corn of a harvest of blessing for the whole field of humanity.

The relation between circumcision and baptism is not properly that of type and antitype; the one is a symbolical ordinance as well as the other, and both alike have an outward form and an inward reality. It is *precisely in such ordinances that the Old and the New dispensations approach nearest to each other*, and, we might almost say, *stand formally upon the same level*. The difference does not so much lie in the ordinances themselves, as in the comparative amount of grace and truth exhibited in them—necessarily less in the earlier, and more in the later. Looking to substance, there is an essential agreement—such as is, indeed, marked by the apostle, when with reference to the spiritual import of baptism, he calls it “the circumcision of Christ,” Col. ii., 11. So far from being less indicative of a change of nature in the proper subjects of it, circumcision was even more so; *in a more obvious and palpable manner it bespoke the necessity of a deliverance from the native corruption of the soul in those who should become the true possessors of blessing*. Hence the apostle makes use of the earlier rite to explain the later, and describes the spiritual change indicated and required by it, (the later or baptism) as “a putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ,” and “having the uncircumcision of the flesh quickened together with Christ.” It would have been travelling entirely in the wrong direction, to use such language for purposes of explanation in christian times—if the ordinance of circumcision had not shadowed forth this spiritual quickening and purification even more palpably and impressively than baptism itself—and shadowed it forth, not prospectively merely for future times, but immediately and *personally* for the members of the Old Covenant. For, by the terms of the covenant, these were ordained to be, not *types* of blessing only, but also *partakers* of blessing. The good contemplated in the covenant was to have its present commencement in their experience. And the outward putting away of the filth of the flesh in circumcision could never have symbolized a corresponding inward purification for the members of the New Covenant, if it had not first done this for the members of the Old. The shadow must have a substance in the one case as well as in the other.—*Typology by Dr. Fairbairn, Free Church College, Glasgow.*

ERRATUM.—On page 23, and in the 9th line of § 10, for—“as soon as it came into existence,” read—as soon as I came into existence.

THE END.

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