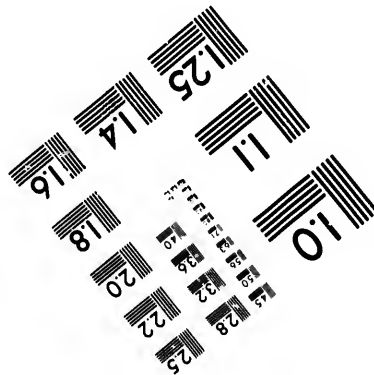
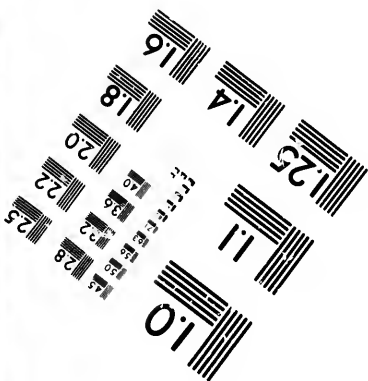
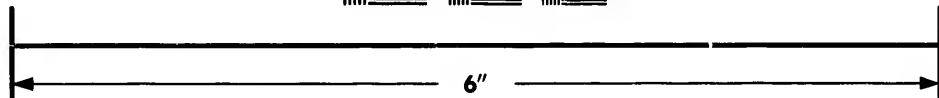
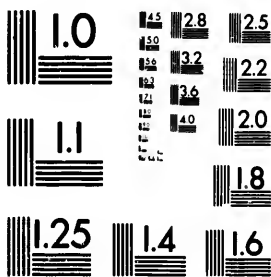


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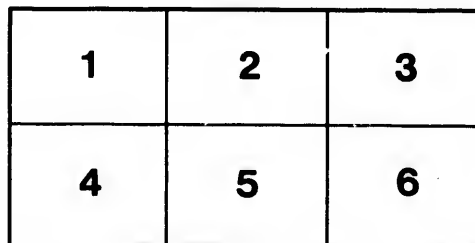
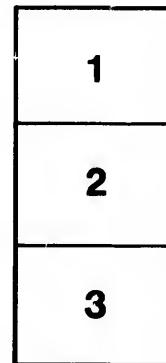
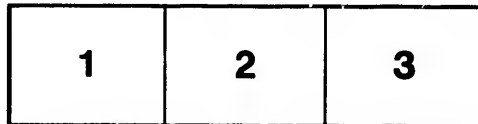
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Box 20

REASONS

FOR RELINQUISHING

Principles of Adult Baptism

AND EMBRACING

THOSE OF INFANT BAPTISM

IN A SERIES OF

ADDRESSED TO THE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS

BAPTIST CHURCHES

IN NOVA-SCOTIA, NEW-BRUNSWICK, AND

BY WILLIAM ELDERS

“ THUS SAITH THE LORD, STAND YE IN THE PATHS,
AND ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE WAY,
WALK THEREIN, AND YE SHALL FIND REST.”

HALIFAX, N. S.

Printed by Edmund Ward, at the Temperance

1834

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Advertisement to the Reader.

THE writer of the following letters, is descended of pedobaptist parents ; but was placed in the early part of life, where he generally attended Baptist preaching, and imbibed Baptist principles. On his obtaining a hope of eternal life, he joined a Baptist church, and has been a preacher among that denomination of christians for a number of years. Some years since, he met with a pamphlet in defence of pedobaptist principles, which he read and replied to. After he had written, a considerable time elapsed before any reply came out. During this time, he was led to think much on the subject, and became convinced that some of the arguments he had urged were inconclusive, and in consequence began to fear he was on the wrong side of the question. His first determinations were, to make the perplexed state of his mind public, and he did converse with some of his friends on the subject. Upon further reflection, he thought this would be premature, as his mind was not really decided on the point ; and his attachment to the people with whom he was connected, together with a pressure of worldly business, which about this time came upon him, hindered him from pushing his enquiries to the extent, that he has since done. During the time that has since elapsed, his mind has been in a fluctuating state, sometimes pretty strongly persuaded that the principles of adult baptism were right, at other times fearing that this was not the case. It has only been during the past winter, that he has become fully decided, and that he found he could not conscientiously continue to baptise persons by immersion, who had been previously

* An attempt to substantiate the legitimacy of
the baptism, as a lawful mode of administration
of the ordinance. In 3 letters to Mr. H. C. H. —
By George Jackson

baptised by sprinkling or pouring. The consequence has been, a separation from his former connections, and a necessity for the publication of these letters.

As it respects his former publication in defence of adult baptism, he is now convinced that he unwittingly opposed the truth. There were some things in it also, that he now views to be highly improper, even had his principles been right; particularly the title—viz. "Infant sprinkling weighed in the balances of the sanctuary and found wanting." It was speaking contemptuously of Baptism, as practised by a great part of the Christian Church; and can only be excused by the inexperience of the writer, and its having been adopted hastily and without due consideration. He would also acknowledge, the great impropriety of the application of a text of scripture on the title page Rev. 22. 18, 19, as it seemed to imply, that he supposed this curse was applicable to all, who differed from him on the subject of baptism. This passage was not inserted by him, but by an injudicious friend, who had more zeal than knowledge, after it had been left at the printing office; and as he was not present when it was printed, he knew nothing of it until a great part of the copies were distributed. With these exceptions, and perhaps a few others, he hopes it will not appear to display a bad state of feeling towards his brethren, from whom he then differed. Should this meet the eye of those
 X gentlemen who replied to him, he would tender to them expressions of good will; and trusts it will ultimately appear, that the controversy has been productive of good.

*The author of the "Voice to the World" replied at
 some length in a pamphlet entitled
 further attempt to substantiate the doctrine
 of Infant Baptism &c. &c. &c. by
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 1823.*

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LETTER I.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

WHILE all the true followers of the Lord Jesus are united in the faith of the gospel as to its great essentials, it must be admitted, that through remaining darkness, they do not all see eye to eye in all things connected with it. Among those things, in which the followers of the Saviour are not universally agreed, is the ordinance of Baptism. For, while a part of the church of Christ, believe that adult believers and their offspring, are the proper subjects of this ordinance ; others believe that it should be confined alone to believing adults. Among the latter class, we have been found. It is confessedly a subject of considerable importance, both to ministers and private christians, as it affects our duty towards God and each other. Particular circumstances have led me to think much on the subject, and the result of my deliberations has been, t^hat we have been in this particular wrong, and that infant baptism is agreeable to the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scriptures.

It will be easily conceived that a variety of considerations, make it painful for me to come forward and make this public avowal. Still I think it is a duty for me so to do, particularly as I have formerly published on the opposite side of the question. The cause of truth is the cause for which every christian should contend, and for which we should be willing to make every sacrifice. In a few years, we shall have passed into eternity, where the different names by which we have been distinguished here, shall be of no avail ; but the approbation of God shall be all in all. But while we shall have passed into eternity, the effect of our principles and practices may affect the

generations that are to succeed us. It is then of great importance, that we should endeavour to be right, even should some local and temporary evils be occasioned by it. I hope that I shall be enabled to evince proper dispositions of heart in my communications ; and that my brethren may be also actuated by a candid and charitable spirit in reading.

I would just observe before closing this letter, that though I have professed to relinquish the principles of adult baptism, I do not mean that adult baptism is in all cases improper. It is only as adult baptism is opposed to infant baptism, that I relinquish it. When our Lord sent forth his apostles into the world, to proselyte and baptise all nations, the first thing to be attended to was to preach the Gospel to adults, and baptise those who believed and their children. But when a nation, town, or village was brought to a profession of christianity, their children would of course be baptised in infancy ; and adult baptism would cease in that place ; except perhaps in some particular instances, where persons would grow up without baptism, and would make it necessary that they should be baptised in adult years. The case is the same in the present day, where missionaries go forth into a heathen country ; being placed in circumstances similar to those of the apostles, they will of course act in a similar manner and baptise adults first.

I remain &c.



LETTER II.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

IN my last, I stated my conviction that infant baptism was of God. I now proceed to show my reasons for this sentiment. And in so doing, it will be necessary to begin where God began to reveal his will to us, viz in the Old

Testament. Judaism and Christianity are not two religions; but one religion in different states of perfection. They have the same author—God, the same object—salvation, the same way of acceptance, by faith. Judaism was Christianity in the bud: Christianity is Judaism in the full flower. The whole scriptures comprising the Old and New Testaments, form one revelation, and must stand or fall together; and one cannot be well understood without the other: we are expressly told, that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,” which is particularly meant of the Old Testament scriptures. It is well known, that the question respecting infant baptism, depends much upon that respecting infant church membership; and where shall we go to solve this question, but to the original constitution of the church of God. When our Lord would lead his disciples to a right understanding of the law of marriage, he referred them to the original institution in Eden. In like manner, it seems reasonable and natural, to refer to the formation of the visible church of God, in the family of Abraham, to ascertain who were constituted members of that church; whether adult believers alone, or believers with their children. And in fact, an unwillingness to refer to the Old Testament on this subject, seems to manifest a secret fear that there is something there unfavourable to our system.

In examining the 17th chap. of Genesis, we find God entering into a solemn covenant with his servant Abraham, confirmed by a visible token—circumcision; in which God required his servant to walk before him, and be perfect, and binding himself to be the God of Abraham and his seed, by an everlasting covenant. Though this covenant was made in the first instance with Abraham personally, and there were some things in it peculiar to himself: yet as we find the token of it administered to all his servants, and afterwards to all those who wished to join themselves in a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, we infer, that this covenant was extended to all that were circumcised, in its leading promise to be their God and the God of their seed. It appears then, that when God in infinite condescension and mercy, entered into a covenant with Abraham, and formed a visible church in his family, children were admitted with their parents into that

church, and into that covenant. Hence I infer that as that covenant was the same that we are now under, and that church the same that we are now in : so our children have the same place in that covenant and church, and the same interest in that promise, that the children of the Jews had.

What remains to be proved is, that the Abrahamic covenant, and the new covenant—the covenant of Grace, are the same ; and that the Jewish and the Christian churches are the same.

I shall first endeavour to prove, that the Abrahamic covenant is the covenant of Grace—the covenant by which all true believers are saved.

First. I shall endeavour to prove it, by showing the consequences that result from a denial of it. The covenant made with Abraham, and afterwards confirmed with Isaac and Jacob, was the foundation and glory of the Jewish church. This covenant promised salvation to them that believed in and obeyed it, or there was no salvation promised to the Jewish church. Now can any person believe, that God formed a church, entered into a covenant with it, and gave it a system of ordinances and precepts ; and that this church should take him for their God, believe in his promises and obey his precepts, and yet go to hell at last ? and that all God's promises to his Zion under the Old Testament amounted only to a few temporal benefits ? Are we not told, that “ He was not ashamed to be called their God and therefore had prepared for them a city ? ” Heb. 11. 16. We read in Luke 1. 5, 6. of two persons, who were members of the Jewish church ; who were “ both righteous before God, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless.” It appears evident that the latter part of the verse is explanatory of the former. They were righteous before God, *by* walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. But if there were no promise of eternal life made to the Jewish church, this might only be a legal righteousness, entitling them to temporal blessings only ; and they might finally fall short of life eternal. But if it be a conclusion too shocking to be admitted, that there were no promise

of eternal life made to believers in the Jewish church ; it must be admitted, that this promise was contained in the Abrahamic covenant, which was the foundation on which the Jewish church was built. If then the Abrahamic covenant, contained a promise of eternal life ; it was the covenant of grace, by which all believers are saved. For there are not two covenants of grace, or two methods of salvation for fallen men.

Secondly, I infer that the Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of grace, from the fact that circumcision, the token of that covenant, was a sign and seal of spiritual and eternal blessings. For thus writes the apostle, Rom. 4. 11 "He (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised ; that righteousness might be imputed to them also." Circumcision as a sign was figurative of regeneration.—As a seal it confirmed the promises made to faith. It was a standing declaration of God's approbation of Abraham's faith, and that every one who in like manner should believe in God should have their faith imputed to them for righteousness, or they should be justified through it.—They should be blessed with faithful Abraham. Now if circumcision be of this spiritual import ; if it is a sign and seal of spiritual and eternal blessings, can we believe that it was appended to a covenant that only promised temporal blessings ? Solomon tells us, that "a fair woman without discretion is like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout." But there would appear to be a still greater incongruity between a spiritual seal affixed to a temporal covenant, than in the circumstance mentioned by the wise man. I might here mention also, that it is evident that the Jewish church always believed that circumcision was of a spiritual import, and that it was connected with the promise of eternal life. Hence we hear them saying, Act 15. 1. *except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved.* They were indeed mistaken in supposing that circumcision was essential to salvation, and thousands of them failed of arriving at heaven, because they rested in the sign without having the thing signified. They had that circumcision, which was outward in the flesh, but they did not seek

that which is inward in the spirit. They had the token of the covenant, but they did not take the God of the covenant to be their God. But the very same thing occurs in the case of baptism.—Baptism has no more virtue to save sinners of itself, than circumcision.—They appear to be of precisely the same import. Hence I infer that they belong to the same covenant of grace.

Thirdly, I infer that the Abrahamic covenant, was the covenant of grace, from the fact that by that covenant he was constituted the father of all believers. “If ye be Christ’s then are ye *Abraham’s seed* and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3. 29.) To what promise does the apostle here refer? To a promise in the Abrahamic covenant. I have made thee a father of many nations (See Rom. 4. 17.) Every true believer on earth, is a son or daughter of Abraham; and their conversion to God is a fulfilment of that promise. Consequently it is still in force, and having been confirmed of God in Christ it can never be done away. God had promised to Abraham not only an Isaac but a numerous seed, who like him should be born, not after the flesh but by virtue of the promise. Hence Paul says “Now we brethren as Isaac was, are the children of promise.” Gal. 4. 28. Now would it not be passing wonderful, if this covenant which constituted Abraham the father of all believers, Jew and Gentile, should be only a temporal covenant; and that it should not require faith nor promise salvation?

Fourthly. I infer, that the Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of grace, from its promises. Its great and comprehensive promise, and which in fact includes every thing else is—“I will be thy God.” That this promise implied a promise of eternal blessedness, is certain from the inference which our Lord draws from it. (Luke 20. 37 and 38 v.) “Now that the dead are raised even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead but of the living; for all live unto him.” The promise here referred to, was the promise of the Abrahamic covenant—“I will be thy God.” And our Lord here proved from it against the Sadducees, that it contained a promise of eternal life,

And if so it is the great comprehensive promise of the covenant of grace. That the Jewish church hoped for life everlasting in body and soul, is evident from many scriptures, particularly the following.—“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers; believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets, and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow,—that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise, made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night hope to come; for which hope’s sake King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”—(Acts 24. 14, 15.—Acts 26. 6, 7, 8.)

To what promise made unto the fathers, does the apostle here refer, but to the everlasting covenant, made with their father Abraham and to his seed; in which he promised to be his God and the God of his seed, and that he would give unto him and unto his seed the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession? Canaan was viewed by them as a type of heaven—as “that rest that remaineth for the people of God.” Thus it was viewed by Abraham, when “by faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a *strange country*, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”—(Heb. 11. 9, 10.) If then the pious Jews, and even the Jewish church generally, understood the promise of the Abrahamic covenant to be the promise of eternal life; and if our Lord and the apostle Paul confirm this, is it not certain that it must be the covenant of grace? In further confirmation of this, see Luke 1.67,75. “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he hath visited and redeemed his people;—to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to *remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham &c.*” Read this prophecy of Zacharias brethren, and see if the promise made to Abraham, and confirmed by circumcision and by the oath of Jehovah, was not the covenant of grace, which is still fulfilling and must continue to be fulfilling, until God

hath redeemed all his people. We will refer to one passage more. "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying surely blessing I will bless thee, and *multiply-
ing I will multiply thee &c.* That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, *we* might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."—(Heb. 6. 13, 18.) We see here brethren, that the apostle infers from the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, that professing christians living under the New Testament dispensation have a right to strong consolation. Could this be, if it was not the covenant of grace, the same covenant under which we are?

I remain, &c.

LETTER III.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

HAVING proved in my last, that the covenant made with Abraham, and confirmed by circumcision and by the oath of Jehovah, is the covenant of grace—the same covenant on which the church now rests; the one foundation laid by prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; I proceed to show that the church resting upon it, is the same, though distinguished by different names in different periods of its history.—And here I may remark that every argument that proves the one establish-
es also the other. Every argument that proves the covenant of the church under the two dispensations, to be the same, proves the church to be the same; and every argument that proves the church under the two dispensations to be the same, proves also the sameness of the covenant. For there is an indissoluble connection between the church and the covenant on which it is founded. That the christian church is a continuation of the Jewish church, appears

from the declarations of the New Testament. In the 11th of Romans, the apostle speaking of the church of God, under the figure of an olive tree, shows that the unbelieving Jews were broken off because of unbelief; that the believing Gentiles were grafted into the same stock by faith, and that ultimately when the Jews are brought to repentance and faith, they shall be grafted in again. The Jews are spoken of in this chapter as natural branches, because as the children of professed believers they had a standing in the church of God by birthright. But when they manifested by their rejection of Christ that they were destitute of faith, they were broken off as dead sapless branches who had no right to a place in the church of God. This shows incontestably that the church of God is the same under both dispensations, and also that faith was required under the Abrahamic covenant, which is an additional proof that it is the same covenant under which we now are.

Again the apostle Paul reminding his Ephesian brethren of what they had formerly been, says "at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth (or church) of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world—but now they were no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."—Eph. 2. 12—19. If the Jewish church were not the church of God, the same church in which we now are: how could these Ephesian brethren be brought into it, or how could they be fellow citizens with the ancient saints and household of God. A variety of other scriptures might be quoted, but these being so directly to the point are abundantly sufficient.

Second. The qualification for church membership is the same viz. a profession of faith. The Jewish church is called Christ's own in the New Testament. He came to *his own* and his own received him not.—John 1. 12. How were they his own? by a *profession of faith*. On no one point is there a greater misunderstanding of the true doctrine of the scripture than on this, among those who oppose infant baptism; you generally believe as I also for-

merly did, that all that was requisite for a standing in the Jewish church, was to be descended of Jewish parents or bought with Jewish money, and to be circumcised. But if this were the case, why were the unbelieving Jews broken off.—See Romans 11. It was not because they were not born of Jewish parents, or bought with Jewish money or circumcised ; all these requisites they possessed, neither was it because of the change that took place in the church at the introduction of the new dispensation ; for then the apostles of our Lord and the believing part of the Jewish nation, would have been broken off too. But they were broken off because of *unbelief*, which shows that faith was as really required in the Jewish church as the christian ; the same thing may be proved from the nature and intent of circumcision. What is circumcision ? It is the token of a covenant in which God has promised to be the God of the person circumcised, and the person has promised to take God for his God, and to be one of his people ; could this be done without faith ?

Third. As faith was equally required in the Jewish church as in the christian, so salvation was equally to be found in that church. Thus said our Lord “ ye worship, ye know not what, we know what we worship for *salvation is of the Jews*.”—John 4. 22. And that salvation was to be obtained in precisely the same way, by faith and patience ; hence the exhortation to New Testament believers “ Be not slothful but followers of them (Old Testament saints) who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”—Heb. 6. 12.

Fourth. Another argument for the sameness of the church is, that the same promises given to the Jewish church in the Old Testament, are in the New Testament applied to the christian church. The apostle Paul having quoted several promises from the Old Testament, says, having therefore *these promises* dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves &c.—2 Cor. 7. 1. How can we have an interest in these promises and be urged to diligence in consequence of them, if we do not belong to the same body and are not built upon the same foundation, see also Heb. 13. 5. where the promise “ I will never leave thee nor forsake thee ” is quoted and applied to the case of believers

in the christian church. Surely then if we have an interest in the Old Testament promises, it must be because we are grafted into the good olive tree—the one church of God, and partake with ancient saints of the fatness of the same stock.

Fifth. Another argument for the sameness of the church of God under different dispensations, is that love to God and love to man constitute the character of a citizen of Zion in ancient as well as in modern times. The enquiry was made in ancient times “Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill?” The answer is—“He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.—In whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoreth them that fear the Lord; he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury; nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”—Ps. 15 Such was the character drawn by the pen of inspiration of an ancient saint, a servant of God, a member of the Jewish church. How applicable in all its essential features, to the child of God now; the worthy member of the church of Christ. The names given to the members of the Old Testament church, are expressive of spirituality of character. One name given to them was that of Israelites. If we recollect on what occasion this name was conferred on Jacob, we shall find that it denotes one, who has *power with God in prayer* and prevails. Another name by which they are frequently designated in the word of God is that of Jews. Concerning the import of this name, an apostle thus writes—“He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, (only) neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.”—Rom. 2. 28, 29. These quotations sufficiently show, that the character of a member of the Jewish church and that of a christian is essentially the same; that it requires the person who sustains it, to be a true worshipper of the one living and true God: a true believer, one who hopes for that salvation that

God has promised in his word, and that obeys his will.— And consequently that the Jew and the Christian are members of the same household of faith, heirs of the same inheritance, members of the same church of God.

Sixth. As the members of the Jewish church sustained the same character, so they had the same employment as the christian church: that of worshipping the same God. A good man—Thomas Scott—on his dying bed, used to say, when his mind was so disordered that he could not worship God, “*I seem to have no fellowship with the church on earth or the church in heaven.*” The idea is in perfect accordance with the whole word of God. The most sublime view that the scriptures give us of the heavenly state, is that of Jehovah sitting upon his throne in the heavenly temple, surrounded by an innumerable multitude of redeemed sinners, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands, ascribing glory, honour and dominion to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever.

The great business of the church of God on earth, is also to show forth the praises of him, who hath called her out of darkness into his marvellous light. Now the Jewish church had not only her sacrifices, but her prayers and songs of praise, in her private dwellings and in her public courts. In Abraham’s removals from place to place while he sojourned in a strange country, he not only erected his altar, but he called on the name of the Lord. The determination of Isaac, and Jacob, and Joshua, was that they would with their households serve the Lord. But the most striking proof of the spiritual nature of the worship of the Old Testament church, is to be found in the psalms of David, that sweet singer of Israel; whose harp not only kindled the spirit of devotion in the ancient church, but which still vibrates in our ears; calling upon us to

Offer notes divine,
To our Creator’s praise.

How deep a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin original and actual, and what a lively faith in the mercy of God, and the plenteous redemption to be found in Jesus Christ, is found in the 51st Psalm. And where can any

thing be found superior, in the true spirit of devotion, to the first verse in the 146th psalm, Watt's version :

I'll praise my Maker with my breath,
 And when my voice is lost in death,
 Praise shall employ my nobler powers.
 My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
 While life and thought and being last,
 Or immortality endures.

If then the songs of ancient Zion, accommodated to the christian state and worship, form still our noblest songs of praise ; is it not a decisive proof of her spiritual state and worship, and consequently of its oneness with the church of Christ, under the present dispensation.

Seventh. I would enquire if the church under the Old and New Testaments be not one, when or how the apostles of our Lord left the one and entered into the other. They were members of the Jewish church, and partook of the last passover under the law with our Lord, as members of the Jewish church ; and we find them after our Lord's resurrection, as pillars in the christian church. They were not broken off from the Jewish church because of unbelief, as the unbelieving Jews were. Is it not then evident that they were in the same church still, though called by a new name, as had been predicted.—Isaiah 62. 2.

Eighth. The prophecies of the Old Testament clearly shew, that the Jewish church was not to be destroyed, and a new one formed. But on the contrary she is exhorted to lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes, to prepare for the accession of new members. It declared that her " Maker is her husband," and that though the mountains should depart and the hills be removed ; yet his kindness should not depart, nor the covenant of his peace be removed from her. Let any person read the 54th and 60th chapters of Isaiah, and see if he can possibly deny the oneness of the church of God, under different dispensations.

The only passage of scripture, that I recollect, as giving any countenance at all to the idea of the Jewish and Christian churches being distinct and separate bodies, is

Eph. 2. 15. "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances for to make in himself of twain one new man." But this does not speak of the christian church, as *another* church, but as a *new* one. An heir who had been during his minority, subject to tutors and governors, and treated in some respects as a servant, though lord of all; might on his coming of age, and being freed from restraints, be with propriety called a *new* man, though he would not be *another* man or a different individual.—See Gal. 4. 1, 7. I take it for granted then, that it has been proved, that the church of God under the different dispensations, is one society, one body, one household of faith, one family, by whom glory is given to God, through Christ Jesus, world without end. Amen.

The consequences resulting from this conclusion are very important.—God gave the children of believers, a place among this society, household or family; they constituted a very considerable part of the church of God, from the days of Abraham. Who has excluded them? Surely no authority, less than that of him who admitted them can do it. Can there be any intimation of the will of God to exclude them found? If there cannot, is not the inference justly drawn. They have a place in the church of God still.

I return then brethren, to the premises with which I set out :

1. That God in entering into a covenant with Abraham, and establishing a church in his family; gave the children an interest in that covenant, and a place in that church, with their parents.
2. That that covenant was the covenant of grace, on which the church still rests; and that the church resting on it was the church of God, in which christians now are.
3. That the children of church members, never having been cut off from the church of God, have a place in it still.

This conclusion is much strengthened by the consideration, that infant church membership was a blessing conferred upon parents and children. And that the New Testament dispensation, has not curtailed the privileges of the people of God.

That infant church membership, was intended to promote and perpetuate religion, in the families of the people of God ; is evident from this one consideration, that it was appointed by an infinitely wise and gracious God for that purpose.

That the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, and the change that has taken place in his church, in consequence of it ; has not lessened the privileges of the people of God, is a fact that no one will venture to deny. But if infant church membership has ceased, both we and our children have sustained a loss. Hence I infer that it has not ceased but exists still.

The deduction of infant baptism from infant church membership, is easy and natural. Hence Dr. Gill says, " let it be proved, that infants are or ought to be members of gospel churches, and we are ready to admit them," *i. e.* to baptism. See his answer to Dickenson, p. 89, as quoted by Mr. Pond.

Hence brethren you see the propriety and necessity of resorting to the Old Testament scriptures, to ascertain who were constituted members of the visible church, when first established ; whether that church were founded on the covenant of grace or not ; and consequently, whether that church was the true church of God—the same church in which we now are. These are questions of great importance to every person, who wishes to know the truth respecting the doctrine of infant baptism.

I am of opinion that infant baptism, may be proved from the New Testament taken in connection with the early history of the Christian church ; but not in that satisfactory manner, in which it can, when the voices of the prophets are joined with those of the apostles.

I remain &c,

LETTER IV.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

IN my last letters I endeavoured to prove that the covenant of the church of God is the same, under the different dispensations. In this I intend to notice the principal improvements that have taken place, notwithstanding this sameness. An individual may pass through a variety of changes from infancy to adult years, and yet be the same individual still. Such is the case I conceive with the church of God; she has been improved in her circumstances, but is the same church still. It has pleased God, always to deal with his church in a way of covenant. I have already stated, that I believed the covenant made with Abraham was the covenant of promise the covenant of grace. That its promises extended to all things, both of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.—See 1 Tim. 4. 8. Yet this same covenant, is now revealed with some advantages; with Abraham it was ratified by typical sacrifices: but now by the true victim—the lamb without blemish or spot, that taketh away the sins of the world. Its promises are also more explicitly stated, and the way of acceptance more clearly defined, when it is said “he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.” Its requirements are also modified. Those of a ceremonial nature are lighter: those of a moral or spiritual nature, more explicitly stated and enforced.

The church is also blessed with greater light. Formerly she had Moses and the prophets; now to these are added Jesus and his apostles. Formerly the Holy Spirit communicated to her a degree of life, but now Jesus has come that she might have it more abundantly. Formerly she had powerful motives to consecrate herself to the service of her God; but now since Jesus has come, and actually given himself for his bride, those motives are greatly increased.

But perhaps in no respect is her circumstances more altered and improved, than in exchanging the ceremonial law, for the simple and more spiritual worship of the house of God under the present dispensation. It pleased God for

wise and gracious purposes, to lay upon his church under the old testament a heavy burden of rites and ceremonies. But the Lord Jesus has now come and taken them all away, nailing them to his cross, and giving us the lighter yoke of baptism and the Lord's supper in their stead.—The whole of the ordinances of the sanctuary under the Old Testament may be divided into two kinds. By the first the people of God, were admitted into covenant with him ; by the second that covenant was confirmed and improved. The first was circumcision, the bloody seal or token of the covenant, by which they were formerly admitted into covenant with God ; and professed to become his people. Of the second class, were all the sacrifices, washings, &c. A part of some of the sacrifices was assigned to the offerer, who fed upon them as a token of reconciliation to God, and his friendship with him ; eating as it were of the same food, and at the same table. This was especially the case in the feast of the passover ; when all the professed people of God, renewed their covenant with God.

This ordinance in a particular manner, set forth the sufferings of Christ, and the benefits received from them by the believer, who fed upon them with thanksgiving ; instead of those rites, our Lord instituted the sacrament of the Lord's supper. There can be no hesitation I think in saying that God has taken away those numerous rites, and given the church baptism and the Lord's supper in their stead. And especially, I think no person can consider the general resemblance between circumcision and baptism, as to their meaning and intent, without seeing that the one has come in place of the other ; except he is hindered by a fear of the inference that may be drawn from it, or has set up a resolution that he will believe nothing, without a positive scripture declaration, asserting or commanding it. I shall only mention two reasons, for believing that baptism has come instead of circumcision :

1. They are of the same import, they are emblematical of regeneration. They both indicate that we are depraved, and need to be renewed in the spirit of our mind.

2. They are both initiatory ordinances. The one to Judaism, the other to christianity. Judaism has been succeeded by christianity ; consequently circumcision has been succeeded by baptism.

In this substitution, as in all the changes that have taken place in the church, much wisdom and goodness are manifested. Baptism occupies the place of circumcision with three advantages :

1. It is more instructive. Circumcision intimated the need of regeneration ; but did not point out the agent who should effect it. But baptism, while it intimates the necessity of regeneration, also points out the agent who effects it—the Holy Spirit.
2. Circumcision was a painful rite, suited to the rigour of the dispensation which it was connected with.— But baptism is easy, of performance, suited to the genius of the present dispensation.
3. It is applicable to females, which circumcision was not. Females under the Old Testament though admitted to the church of God, yet had no initiatory ordinance, formally recognising their right to a place in it. Under the present dispensation, this is altered. There is now no distinction in this respect, between male and female. Hence we read “they were baptised both men and women.”

I conclude then brethren, that as baptism is now the seed of the new covenant instead of circumcision, and the initiatory ordinance into the church of Christ ; and as it is applicable to females as well as males, it ought to be administered to all who are members of the visible church, viz. believing parents and their children, without distinction of sex.

Thus saith the mercy of the Lord,
 I'll be a God to thee ;
 I'll bless thy numerous race, and they
 Shall be a seed for me.

Abra'm believed the promised grace,
 And gave his sons to God ;
 But water seals the blessing now,
 That once was sealed with blood.

Thus Lydia sanctify'd her house,
 When she received the word ;
 Thus the believing Jailor gave,
 His household to the Lord.

Thus later saints, eternal King,
 Thine ancient truths embrace ;
 To thee their infant offspring bring,
 And humbly claim thy grace.

WATTS.

I remain &c.

LETTER V.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

HAVING in the preceding letters, shewn the firm basis on which the doctrine of infant church membership and infant baptism rests, I should immediately proceed to those proofs, that further establish this doctrine in the New Testament, were it not that the baptism of John has some bearing upon this question. And I can find no better place to discuss this subject than the present, I shall therefore devote the present letter to this purpose. I do not believe that the baptism of John was christian baptism, or the seal of the new covenant ; and will assign my reasons.

1. The old covenant was not yet vacated.—It still stood fast ; and circumcision continued to be its seal, until the resurrection of our Lord, when he commanded his disciples to go proselyte the nations to christianity, baptising them in the name of the Trinity. Consequently baptism could not be administered as a profession of christianity.

2. John did not preach these great truths, that lay at the foundation of the christian system ; as the trinity of persons in the Godhead, the vicarious death of Christ, his burial, resurrection, ascension and intercession &c. These

are called by the apostle the gospel—1 Cor. 15. And certainly they were an essential part of that gospel which the apostles were to preach, when our Lord declared that “he who believeth and is baptised shall be saved.”

3. John does not appear to have baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; which has always been considered essential to christian baptism.

4. It appears that some of John’s disciples at least were baptised by the apostles.—See Acts 19. I am aware it has been thought by many, that these disciples were not rebaptised , but this has resulted not from the words of the sacred writer, but to avoid certain inferences that might be drawn from them. Some pedobaptists have been unwilling to understand them according to their plain import, lest they should afford some countenance to anabaptists ; some baptists have been unwilling to understand them thus, lest they should prove the baptism of John not to be christian baptism. But it appears to me, that none of these consequences are such, as should induce us to depart from the apparent meaning of the sacred writer. It certainly does not appear, that the rebaptising of these persons, under the circumstances in which they were placed, affords any sanction to the practice of rebaptising any who have already received christian baptism. Nor does it appear necessary to depart from the plain meaning of the words, to give sanction to the baptism of John as christian baptism ; for it does not appear that it was such.

5. When our Lord commanded his apostles to preach the gospel to every creature and to baptise those who believed, he made no exception in favor of John’s disciples ; and we have no reason to believe he gave them any private instructions on the subject. Further when we consider that John had baptised at least a large proportion of the people of Jerusalem, Judea, and all the region round about Jordan ; have we not reason to believe, that some of his disciples were baptised on the day of Pentecost and succeeding days.

It will perhaps be enquired if John’s baptism was not christian baptism, what purpose did it answer ; and why

did our Lord sanction it by being baptised. John was sent to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. To effect this, he preached the necessity of personal repentance and reformation ; and also that they should believe on the Messiah when he was made manifest among them, declaring that he was already come, and that he would baptise them with the Holy Ghost and with fire, when he appeared among them. The Jews were familiar with the use of water, as an emblem of purity ; his baptism then was in harmony with his doctrine, "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance," and tended to enforce it. It also led his disciples, to expect a further baptism of the Holy Spirit from the Saviour, and thus induced them to look for and expect him.

As John was sent as a harbinger to the Messiah, and was thus engaged in his mission, our Lord sanctioned his preaching and baptism, by being baptised himself ; saying "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," or every divine institution. But we cannot believe that our Lord was baptised in his own name. There is something in baptism, that was not exactly suited to our Lord's state. Baptism seems to imply, that we are polluted and need washing ; which was not the case with our Lord. He merely complied with it as a divine institution for the time being. Thus setting us an example intended to extend to every duty of life—thus teaching us to do the will of our Father who is in heaven. As John thus acted merely as a forerunner of our Lord, he did not require any new profession of faith. The people were Jews, and were to continue so till christianity was introduced. John was not sent to preach christianity, but merely to bring about a revival of religion in the Jewish church, and to call the attention of the people to the coming Saviour, and thus to prepare them for his reception.

He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord and make his paths straight—a highly honourable office. Let us my brethren imitate him in his love to our Lord, in his self-denial in being willing that our Lord should increase while he decreased, in the fervency of his spirit in urging men to repentance and reformation. But we have no occasion to imitate him in

preaching in the wilderness nor in baptising in Jordan.—The peculiar purpose for which he was sent, has been long since accomplished ; the least in the christian church knows more of the peculiar truths of christianity, than did he. And his baptising the Jews in adult years unto repentance, affords no proof that we should baptise adult christians unto or upon repentance, when they have already been dedicated to the three-one God in infancy in baptism; and probably many of them worshippers in his courts for many years.

I remain &c.

LETTER VI.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

Having in my former Letters stated the arguments in favour of infant baptism from the Old Testament: and having also shewn that John's baptism being under the law, could not be the seal of the new covenant or christian baptism, and therefore could not affect the question ; I proceed to notice those arguments derived from the New Testament, and which shew that we were not mistaken in our conclusions, drawn from the sameness of the church and the covenant. And as the commission given by our Lord to his apostles—Mat 28. 19, 20, contains the most full and express instructions on this subject that are recorded, we shall quote them as the foundation of our argument. "Go ye therefore and teach—proselyte or make disciples of—all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.—Amen." That the word translated teach, in the first part of this commission, means to proselyte or make disciples of, is I believe admitted on all hands. These words are some of the most memorable that were ever spoken,

whether we consider the dignity of the speaker, the occasion on which they were spoken, the importance of the instruction to be conveyed, the promises contained, the confirmation to be given to the whole by the administration of baptism, the seal of the new covenant in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, or the blessed consequences that have resulted and that will result on earth and in heaven—in time and in eternity. The speaker was the Messiah, so long promised—so long expected, the light to lighten the Gentiles, the glory of his people Israel: the great prophet, priest and king of Zion: the Son of the highest: the desire of nations: he for whom kings, prophets and righteous men had waited long, and died without the sight—God manifest in the flesh. The occasion on which they were spoken, was also amazingly interesting: it was that point of time that terminated the old covenant, and introduced the new—when the great high priest of our profession, having offered the great atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, had descended into the regions of the dead, encountered death in his own dominions, despoiled him of his sting, had risen again from the dead as a mighty conqueror: when he was about to ascend to God, to claim the rewards of his obedience unto death, and to dispense to the nations of the earth, the blessings of his grace.

The instruction to be conveyed was also of incalculable importance; it was not merely instruction relating to the interests of this life, but it was to teach them the way to heaven. God had indeed given his church a light in every age to conduct her to glory; but it was only the dawning of the day—a feeble light shining in a dark place. But now the sun of righteousness was risen, had attained his noontide splendour, and shed forth abundant light; they were to teach the nations Christian theology. It is to this instruction that we owe our knowledge of God, our victory over sin, our prospects of life everlasting. The promises of the covenant also confirmed by baptism, are many and great, including all things necessary for this life and that which is to come; secured to every individual who should flee for refuge to the hope set before them who should believe and obey. The declaration that he would be with his church always till the world should end,

also secured her perpetuity, her enlargement and her final victory over every enemy. Let us endeavour rightly to understand, and firmly to believe these words my brethren, that we may greatly rejoice in the prospects they hold out, for the church of God in time and eternity. It would open a profitable and pleasing field for contemplation, could we follow our Lord into the various departments of it ; but time forbids. My business with them at present is, to prove the doctrine of infant baptism from them ; this I shall endeavour to do, from the following considerations:

1. The plain literal meaning of the words, would lead us to conclude, that children of every age were included in them. There is no nation under heaven, that is not composed of parents and children ; we are not to reject the literal meaning of a passage of scripture, where there is not an absolute necessity for it. There is no such necessity here, especially if we consider—

2. The Jewish method of proselyting. Our Lord was a Jew, and had the language of the Old Testament scriptures on his lips in life and in death ; his apostles were also Jews, and were familiar with the Jewish scriptures and usages ; and it is reasonable to believe, he would speak and they would understand his words, in the same sense in which they would be generally used and understood. At that time God gave the following directions to Israel, respecting proselytes ;—when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it, and he shall be as one born in the land ; for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourns among you.—Ex. 12. 48, 49.” A person thus proselyted and circumcised would be a regular member of the church of God. Under the Old Testament, Judaism had its promises and its precepts, as well as christianity. Is there any thing in christianity, that would hinder an infant from being proselyted to it, any more than to Judaism? If there is not, why should we think that our Lord did not intend the children to be baptised with their parents, and brought into the church of God, as they had been since a visible church was established in the family of A-

braham. The ordinances of circumcision and the passover, are of as sacred a nature as baptism and the Lord's supper, and are just as closely connected with the promises of eternal life ; and just as much required faith for the right performance of them. If then these ordinances required faith in adults, and yet circumcision was by God's command, administered to the infants of professing parents ; does it not obviate every objection, that can be brought against infant baptism, on the ground of children being incapable of faith. Let the reader here refer to the reasoning on this subject in the second Letter.

The idea generally entertained by you my brethren, that the ordinances of the Old Testament church did not require faith, and consequently that faith was not required of proselytes, to the acceptable performance of them ; is I conceive at variance with the first principles of scripture. Is it not a scriptural principle, that " without faith it is impossible to please God in any duty." As this is a point of importance, permit me to ask a few questions, with a view further to elucidate it. For what purpose were the scriptures given to the Jews ? The answer must be, to make them wise unto salvation.—2 Tim. 3. 14—17. For what purpose were the ordinances of circumcision, sacrifices, passover, &c. given ; was it not to concur with the scriptures, in the salvation of their souls. Can any person believe that God gave the scriptures for men's salvation, and gave in connection with them, a system of religious rites ; and yet those rites had no tendency, to concur with the word. Is it not evident, that the scriptures and the ordinances had the same general tendency to promote the salvation of those that used them. Another question is, how were men to profit by the word and ordinances of God's house ? Must not the answer be *by faith* ; was it not by faith that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Is there any way by which a person can profit in the things of religion but by faith ? This conducts us to the conclusion, that God required faith in Jewish proselytes, as truly as he does in those who are proselyted to christianity ; and that therefore the objection made against infant baptism, on the ground of infants being incapable of faith, impeaches the wisdom and goodness of God, in appointing infant circumcision.

3. The manner of our Lord's expressing himself elsewhere, will be admitted to throw some light on this command. He knew the end from the beginning, and his conduct was always consistent with itself. If our Lord had intended, that children should have no place in his visible kingdom, under the new dispensation; as this would be a great change in the state of things, he would undoubtedly apprise them of it, and prepare them for it. But did he do so? Did he not say "*suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*" The apostles probably at the time when our Lord spoke these words, had very erroneous views of our Lord's visible kingdom on earth; they supposed it would surpass the reign of David or Solomon in outward splendour and temporal prosperity, and that it was beneath our Lord's dignity, to notice little children. But he thus taught them, that his kingdom was not of this world, but was of a spiritual nature: intended to instruct men in spiritual things, and save their souls; and that little children would be fit subjects of this kingdom. That our Lord meant what he said—"of such is the kingdom" of these very children that were brought to him, is very evident from the following considerations:

1. He took them in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Who could have been meant but those very identical children? It would be subversive of all just rules for understanding any writing, to say that our Lord meant not these children, but good men who in some respects resemble children.

2. It is said, our Lord was much displeased at the disciples, for hindering their being brought. Why was our Lord displeased with his disciples, for hindering these children? Because good men resembled little children, or because little children were dear to him themselves; so that he laid down his life for them, gave them a place in his visible church under the Old Testament, and promised to be not only the God of his people, but of their seed also? As it appears evident then, that those children brought to him and whom he blessed were intended; the question returns what did our Lord mean by the kingdom of God, or kingdom of heaven. We know that it gene-

rally means in the New Testament the *gospel church*, the visible kingdom of God among men. If that be its meaning here, it is decisive of the question ; it decides that the children of professed believers, as the parents of these being Jews were—have a right to a place in the visible church of God. If it mean the kingdom of glory, it is scarce less decisive ; for if children are fit for heaven, they are certainly fit for a place in the church on earth. I would request you my brethren to examine this passage candidly and prayerfully, and as in the sight of God ; not to see how you shall answer it, but to endeavour to ascertain its true meaning. The evangelists thought it of great importance, for three of them record it. I think every person who opposes infant baptism, must think it hard to be understood ; but the apostles, when their prejudices in favour of a temporal kingdom were removed by the Holy Spirit, and their understandings opened to understand the scriptures ; would be enabled to see its true import, and would find it in perfect harmony with the command—“ proselyte all nations, baptising them &c.”

3. If these words, “ go proselyte all nations &c.” do not include children, then the apostles had no charge concerning them at all ; and consequently ordinary pastors have not. Can we believe that this is the case. Let me ask such of you my brethren, as are intrusted as under shepherds with the care of souls, by the great shepherd, Do you not conceive, that the children of your people are entrusted to your care. Our Lord said to Peter, “ feed my sheep”—“ feed my lambs.” Our Lord’s flock under the Old Testament, consisted of parents and children, sheep and lambs ; see Ezekiel 16. 20, 21. where God speaks of the sons and daughters of his professed people—and very wicked people too—as his sons and daughters ; and accuses them of having slain them, and caused them to pass through the fire to Moloch, instead of bringing them up for him. Can we believe that God has under the New Testament cast off the children while he takes the parents ; or that he begins to have a care of children, the children of his professed people, at a later period of life than under the Old Testament.

4. That the apostles understood our Lord to include

children in the commission with the parents, is evident from their own manner of address to their hearers. If the apostles understood our Lord, that none but adults were to be the subjects of his kingdom, it would be necessary for them particularly to state this; for they addressed Jews who were attached to the Abrahamic covenant, and fully believed that when God took into covenant with himself the parents, he took their seed also. But did they do so?—Did they not lead them directly to the Abrahamic covenant, saying “ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham” &c. And again, “Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and your children” &c.—Acts 3, 25 and 2. 38, 39. It was an additional argument, to induce them to repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, that their children would be benefited by it as well as themselves. When God took Abraham into covenant with himself, he took his children also, so that they were brought up in the true knowledge of God; and as many of them as believed were saved. So now as many as repented and believed in Jesus Christ, and were baptised in his name, would have a saving interest in the covenant, which God made with their father Abraham; and their children would have the benefit of it also: they would have an interest in the same covenant, have religious privileges, and as many of them as believed would finally be saved. But if they refused to believe in and obey Jesus Christ, that prophet greater than Moses, whom God had promised to raise up, they should be cut off from the people and church of God, because of their unbelief; as he had declared.—See Acts 3. 23; and their children would also be cut off with them, and would no longer have any interest in the promises of God. Such seems to be the tenor of the apostle’s reasoning in the 2d and 3d chap. of Acts. Read those chapters brethren with attention; and see if you do not agree with me, that the apostles understood their commission to be in perfect harmony with the covenant, made with their fathers; and consequently to extend to parents and children.

5. I infer the same thing from the fact, that we never find the Jews making any objection to the apostles' teaching, as having a tendency to exclude their children from the privileges of the church of God. The children of the Jews, had always had a place in the church of God, not only from the time of Moses, but also from that of Abraham four hundred years before the giving of the ceremonial law. Now to exclude their children from the church of God, would have appeared to them as cruel as the conduct of Pharaoh, who "cast out their young children, to the end that they should not live." Yea it would have appeared to them a greater injury; for they considered the interest their children had in the Abrahamic covenant, as securing to them eternal life. We find when the apostles were proving that Jesus was the Christ, the unbelieving Jews frequently opposed and blasphemed, but never do we find either believing or unbelieving Jews make any objection to the apostles' doctrine, respecting the children of believers. Hence I infer, that it was the same as that taught in the Old Testament.

6. I infer the same thing from the fact, that the believing Jews continued to circumcise their children under the eye of the apostles at Jerusalem, for a number of years after the resurrection of our Lord. The ceremonial law was virtually abolished, at the death of our Lord; and circumcision ought to have ceased at the introduction of a new dispensation, as baptism had come in its stead. But the believing Jews, still clave to the ceremonial law, not being sensible that it was abrogated; and the apostles from motives of tenderness, permitted it. But they undoubtedly practised it upon the principle of infant church membership. Now can we conceive, that the apostles would have sanctioned it, if the principle itself were false.

7. I infer that our Lord included children in the commission, from the fact that an apostle recognises the children to be holy when even one of the parents is a believer; for thus he writes 1 Cor. 7. 14.—"The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean; *but now are they holy.*" It is as if the apostle had said, where two are united in wedlock, a christian and

a heathen, the better part shall give denomination to both. They shall both be considered as christians, as far as the children are concerned, so that the children are relatively holy, as if both parents were christians; and are in consequence entitled to a place in the church of God. You need not therefore leave your unbelieving partners on this account. This perfectly suits the tenor of the apostles, discourse, which was to persuade believers not to separate from their unbelieving partners. He also subjoins an additional argument.—How knowest thou O man, but thou shalt save thy wife &c.; and this appears to me to be the only sense, in which it can be consistently understood. It has been said, that the holiness of the children means legitimacy; but surely there was no law at Corinth a heathen city, that made it necessary for the parents to be christians, in order that their children should be legitimate. “It is remarked, that the term *holy* is used in only two senses in the sacred writings; it always expresses either an *internal* or *external*, a *real* or a *relative* holiness. It is not pretended that the children of believers, are *really* and *internally* holy. The holiness ascribed to them is therefore a *visible* or *relative* holiness; they are called holy, because of *their peculiar appropriation to God*. They are called holy, because of *their connexion with the visible church*.”—This appears to me to express the true meaning of the apostle. I think those who oppose infant baptism, will always find this a hard text to be understood.

8. I infer that the apostles understood our Lord to mean, that children were to be baptised with their parents, in the same manner that they were circumcised with them in the Jewish church; from the fact that they baptised households. In the 16th chap. of Acts we have an account of the baptism of two households in one city. Concerning one of these, the household of Lydia, it is thus written.—“And a certain woman named Lydia a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptised and her household, she besought us” &c.—Acts 16. 14, 15. A person who was determined not to believe in infant baptism, might say a good deal to set aside the e-

vidence, contained in this passage of scripture in its favour. He might treat it as an unprincipled attorney would an evidence in a court of justice ; which he found to be unfavourable to his cause. He might endeavour to make it appear, that it meant any thing but what it appeared to mean ; or he might endeavour to silence it, by saying we could not understand what it did mean. He might say, Lydia was a travelling merchant, she might not have any husband or any children: or if she had children, they might not be with her: or if they were with her, they might not be baptised: or if they were baptised, they might have been converted to God, as she was. But after all, here are some stubborn facts, that look favourable to the doctrine of infant baptism ; and that are not easily set aside.

An account of her conversion is given in these words: "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." But there is no account of the conversion of her household, whether adult or infant. If they had been adults and were converted, would not the sacred writer have recorded it as well as her's? If her household consisted of servants, were not their souls as valuable as her's; and would it not have been as much to the praise of divine grace, to record their conversion as her's?—I infer therefore that they were not converted at that time. This is farther confirmed by what follows, ver. 15.—"If ye have judged *me* to be faithful to the Lord, come into *my* house and abide there." Had her family been adult believers, she would have said, "if ye have judged *us* to be faithful to the Lord, &c. But notwithstanding they were not converted, as far as appears from the narrative, yet they were baptised. What is the natural inference?—Is it not that they were baptised, because they were *her* household, and on her profession of faith. The same conclusion will naturally follow, from the manner in which the sacred writer narrates the baptism of the jailor's household—Acts 16. 33 ; "And was baptised he and all his straightway." The impression left upon the mind is, that they were baptised because they were *his*. Paul also mentions his having baptised the household of Stephanas. It is also true that Paul speaks of the household of Stephanas, as having addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. But this does not prove that they were all converted persons at the time

of their baptism : it was probably many years after their baptism, that they ministered to the saints.

To conclude. It is utterly improbable either that there were no infants or young children in those households indiscriminately taken ; or that every individual in those three households, should be converted to God at one time, and baptised upon a personal profession of faith. Now my brethren, you think that infant baptism is an antichristian ordinance, and that it has done immense evil in the christian church ; and yet you think God has left his word calculated to lead the sincere enquirer into this practice ; for it is evident that these accounts of the baptism of households, taken in connection with the doctrine of the Old Testament on this subject, is directly calculated to mislead, and has misled tens of thousands of sincere enquirers, if the doctrine of infant baptism be false. Whether a God of wisdom and truth, would be likely to do so, judge ye.

9. I infer that the apostles baptised infants ; from the fact that they address children, and instruct them in their epistles to the churches.—Eph. 6. 1.—3 Col. 3. 20. The commission ran to proselyte, to baptise, to teach all things. Among these all things to be taught after they were baptised, were relative duties—husbands to wives—parents to children—children to parents, &c. When the apostles address parents, we believe them to be christian parents, members of the church addressed ; and when they address children, have we not an equal reason to believe, that they were christian children baptised as members of the church. Hence I infer that the children of the members of the christian churches at Ephesus and Colosse, had been baptised and had a visible standing in the church. It is perfectly futile to say, that these children had professed faith themselves, and had been baptised. These epistles were no doubt read in the public assemblies of the churches, and of course were addressed to all the children of church members without discrimination. In fact, when christian parents now read those epistles in their families, they are addressed to their children as truly as they were to the primitive churches.

I remain &c.

LETTER VII.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

Having in the preceding Letter concluded my argument, drawn from the commission given by our Lord to his apostles, and other collateral evidences in the New Testament; I now propose to notice the evidence in favour of infant baptism, from the practice of the christian church in subsequent ages. In bringing forward those ancient christian writers, I do not rest upon them as authorities, but merely cite them as evidences of the practice of the christian church, at the time when they wrote. There can be no doubt but that the apostles rightly understood our Lord's command, in reference to baptism; and that they practised agreeably to it. And there can be no reason to think that their immediate successors, or those who came soon after them, would depart from their practice. Great changes in large bodies of men, seldom or never take place suddenly; it is by slow degrees generally, that large bodies of men change their principles or practices, especially in things pertaining to religion; the knowledge of which was derived from one common source, the ministry of the apostles, and established by the authority of God. The instructions and example of our Lord and his apostles, were also preserved in the New Testament and were made the common standard of faith and practice to all christians. When we consider also, that our Lord promised to be with his church till the world should end, it seems scarcely possible that he should permit her almost immediately, to depart from the faith and practice once delivered to the saints.

Before proceeding to cite those evidences it may be necessary to notice, that but few of the writings of the primitive christians of the first, or a great part of the second century, have come down to us. Pedobaptist writers believe that they find intimations of this practice, in the fragments of their writings, from so early a period as that of Hermas, who was supposed to be contemporary with Paul and mentioned by him.—Rom. 16. 14. But as there is no one who expressly mentions it before Tertullian, who wrote about the close of the second century, I shall refer

to him as quoted by Mr. Pond, p. 127.—“They who understand the weight of baptism, will rather dread the receiving of it than the delaying of it; therefore to every one’s condition or disposition and age, *the delaying of baptism is more profitable, especially in the case of children.* Why does that innocent age *make such haste to baptism*; what occasion is there *except in cases of necessity*, that the sponsors should be brought into danger.”

Mr. Pond remarks that here is direct proof, that Tertullian considered infant baptism both lawful and important; he implicitly recommends it in cases of necessity, and gives direct proof of its great prevalence in those early times, when he says: why does that *innocent age make such haste to baptism*. He also remarks, that he does not ground the practice upon Tertullian’s opinion, for that he was an extravagantly fanciful, whimsical writer; embraced many strange and peculiar notions, and was finally ejected from the communion of the church;—but simply cites him, as a witness of what was the practice of the age in which he lived. His testimony is the more important, as he in some respect opposes or rather advises the delaying of infant baptism, except in cases of necessity. Had he known that infant baptism was a new practice, would he not have opposed it on that principle. But he did not; nor on the principle on which you my brethren oppose it, viz. want of faith in infants. He is therefore an unbiassed witness that infant baptism then prevailed, and that it had prevailed as far back as his knowledge extended; his opinion seems to have been, that baptism obtained the remission of sins, past, original, or actual: but that sins committed after baptism were almost unpardonable.

This opinion, it is well known afterwards considerably prevailed; and as far as it prevailed, would tend to hinder the practice of infant baptism. A second witness from the same work, will be brought forward in the person of Origen, who says “infants by the usages of the church are baptised. Infants are baptised for the remission of sins—infants are baptised, because by the sacrament of baptism our pollution is taken away.” Mr. Pond refers to the works of this father, from which these extracts are made, and remarks that he was born about A. D. 185, and that he had the

best means of knowing the practice of the apostles, respecting infant baptism, for his grandfather or at least his great grandfather both of whom according to Eusebius were christians—were cotemporary with the apostles themselves. Add to this, he was one of the most learned men of his time, travelled into various countries, and was acquainted with the customs of the whole christian church. He argues from infant baptism in proof of original sin.—His argument would have had no weight, had infant baptism been a questionable practice ; he constantly speaks of it as a universally approved and established custom ; he also vindicates the authority of those extracts, by shewing that they were not taken from Ruffinus' translation of some of Origen's works, and which is said to be faulty ; but from Jerome's translation, or from the original Greek.

My next reference shall be to Cyprian, and the council of Carthage. This council was called A. D. 253, to determine among other things, whether the baptism of infants was to be deferred till the eighth day, as in the case of circumcision ; or whether it should be administered at any time previous. The unanimous opinion of the council was, that it should not be deferred, but might be administered at any time after the birth of the child. Here says Mr. Milner "is an assembly of 66 pastors, men of approved fidelity and gravity, who have stood the fiery trial of some of the severest persecutions ever known ; who have testified their love to the Lord Jesus in a more striking manner, than any antipedobaptists have had an opportunity of doing in our days, and who seem not to have been wanting in any fundamental of godliness. Before this assembly a question is brought,—not whether infants should be baptised,—none contradicted this ; but whether they should be baptised immediately, or on the eighth day. To a man they determined to baptise them immediately."

Clementina Constitutions—"Baptise your infants, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of God"

Apostolic Constitutions—In this very ancient though not inspired book, "there is express mention of infant baptism, as commanded by Christ."

Jerome—"If infants be not baptised, the sin of omitting their baptism is laid to the parents."

Ambrose—"The baptism of infants, was the practice of the apostles; and has ever been in the church till this time."

Augustine or Austin—"Infant baptism the whole church practices: it was not instituted by councils, but was ever in use. The whole church of Christ, has constantly held that infants were baptised for the forgiveness of sins. Let no one so much as whisper any other doctrine in your ears; this the church has always had, has always held, I have never read or heard of any christian catholic or sectary who held otherwise."

Augustine or Austin wrote in the fourth century. He is styled by Mr Milner, "the great luminary" of the century in which he lived. He is bitterly reviled by Robinson in his history of baptism, because he was a zealous defender of those doctrines, now generally termed Calvinistic, and because he believed in infant baptism; whether you ought to esteem his authority the less on these accounts judge ye.

Calvin—"Whereas certain persons spread abroad among simple people, that there passed a long series of years after the resurrection of Christ, in which infant baptism was unknown, therein they lie most abominably; for there is no writer so ancient, that doth not certainly refer the beginning thereof to the age of the apostles."

Brown—"None can without the most affronted imposition, alledge that infant baptism was not commonly allowed in the primitive ages of Christianity."

I have made the above citations from Pond's treatise on baptism, published in 1819, in answer to Mr. Jadson's sermon on baptism. It has been a number of years before the public, and I am not aware that the correctness of his quotations, has ever been objected to. Want of room compels me to omit a great number of authorities quoted or referred to by him; but the above it is thought are sufficient to prove, if any thing can be proved from history, that infant baptism prevailed, without the least opposition in the church of Christ, from the earliest period of which we have any account of baptism being practised.

Mr. Pond further states, "that catalogues of all sects of professing christians in the four first centuries, the very period when infant baptism must have been introduced, if

it were not of divine original—were early written and are still extant. In these several catalogues, the differences of opinion which obtained in those early times, respecting baptism are particularly recounted and minutely designated. Some sects are mentioned, who made no use of water baptism; and the different forms and ways in which baptism was administered by different sects are distinctly described. Yet there is not the least intimation of any except those who denied water baptism altogether, who did not consider infant baptism a divine institution.

How shall we account my brethren for this early—this general prevalence of infant baptism among all denominations of christians, who practised baptism at all. Shall we say that all these followers of our Lord, entered into a general and secret conspiracy without a dissenting voice, to cast away the laws of Christ, and to substitute an invention of their own. If infant baptism be an innovation would not some have risen up to oppose it? If the apostles established christian churches over a great part of the world, composed entirely of adults; is it not beyond credibility, that infants could have been brought into all those churches, without any opposition. It is well known that since the dispute began about infant baptism, in the sixteenth century, there is not a commentator upon scripture, nor hardly any christian writer, who has written much on the subject of religion, but what has something in his writings referring to this dispute. How is it that there is such a total silence on the subject in ancient writers. You suppose my brethren that you have the whole scripture on your side, and yet you cannot reestablish truth in the church of God without the most determined opposition; while those ancient christians, could introduce a pernicious error, without any individual having sufficient love to the truth, to lift up a warning voice against it.—To him who can believe this, nothing will be incredible.

But there is another view of the subject, that will I think give additional proof, that infant baptism is not an invention of men, but is taught in the scriptures. It has always been the opinion of the great body of the christian church, including her martyrs, her confessors, her most zealous and successful preachers, her ablest divines, her best commentators, her most holy and humble members,

that infant baptism is taught in the scriptures. Commentators who employ so much of their time about the scriptures, and who have it constantly passing in review before them, are all of this opinion I believe, except Dr. Gill; and he though a man of great learning and piety, was not a man of sound judgment in many particulars. Now what can have produced this impression: must there not be a cause for every effect. When we see an impression on the wax, we conclude there was something on the seal to produce it; and when we see so great a proportion of the christian church, for so many ages, agree in believing that the doctrine of infant baptism is taught in the scriptures, can we resist the impression that there is something in the scriptures to induce this belief. But it will be replied that error has evidently prevailed in the church of Christ very extensively, and for long periods. True; but has any error prevailed in the church of Christ of so important a nature as infant baptism, and so universally as to time and place. The belief of the doctrine of a trinity of persons in the Godhead, has not been more general, than that of infant baptism. If then infant baptism be an error, it is the only one that has ever prevailed for so long a period of years; and among all denominations of christians. But further my brethren, if infant baptism be only an invention of men, and not to be considered as christian baptism; there is no christian baptism in the world. You do not believe that any unbaptised person, has a right to baptise. Hence were Dr. Owen or President Edwards living, and were they to become baptists you would not consider them qualified to baptise, until they had been baptised by immersion and ordained by baptists. But if this be the case, how did the first baptist ministers obtain these qualifications? Dr. Gill acknowledges that during 700 years, viz. from the fourth century till the eleventh, he could find no instance of any one opposing infant baptism; so that during this 700 years there was no christian baptism in the world. And as there has been no one sent since with authority to restore it, there can be none now, so that not only all pedobaptist, but all baptist churches are without christian baptism to the present day. Such are the absurdities to which a denial of the validity of infant baptism will lead us.

I remain &c.

LETTER VIII.

BELOVED BROTHERS,

Having stated in the above Letters, my reasons for relinquishing the principles of adult baptism; I proceed to notice and obviate the objections, that are frequently urged against infant baptism. These objections I have had myself, and would wish to assist others in getting rid of them; that they may return to the old paths and thus find rest to their souls,

1. It is objected to the practice of infant baptism, that if it rests upon that of circumcision, males only should be baptised; as males only were circumcised. If the Jewish females had not been considered as church members, there would have been some force in this objection; but this was not the case. The females were as truly church members as the males, and as really in covenant with God, though the token of the covenant was not applicable to them. When a king requires an oath of allegiance from his subjects, it is generally thought sufficient for the males to take it, and the females are considered as virtually included. So in this case the King of Zion did not require the oath of his female subjects, under the former dispensation; but he has now declared, that the distinction in this respect is done away, and that they should be "baptised both men and women."

2. It may be objected that if infants are to be baptised, they ought also to partake of the Lord's supper, as the children of the Jews did of the passover. This is however completely obviated by the consideration, that the Jewish children did not go up to the temple, or partake of the sacrifices till they were twelve years of age, as is agreed by those most conversant with the subject.—See Luke 2. 41, 42. The time when persons who have been baptised in infancy, should be encouraged to come forward into full communion with the church, must be left to the discretion of the church. The propriety of this will appear from a practise in general use among yourselves. When a person offers himself as a candidate for baptism and church membership, you expect him to give some account of his conversion to God, his knowledge and approbation of the

doctrines of the gospel as believed by you ; perhaps you also take time to enquire into what his moral character has been. Now there is no scriptural command or precedent to found this upon ; yet you think you are authorised by the general principles of christian prudence to do so. And why may not pedobaptist churches, be left to the same principles, in admitting their children to the full communion of the church.

3. It is frequently said, that if baptism comes in the stead of circumcision, why is it not always administered on the eighth day, as in the case of circumcision. To this it may be replied, that the reason of circumcision being deferred till the eighth day, was of a ceremonial nature ; and the ceremonial law being now dead, parents are left at liberty on this subject. In Lev. 12. 2, 3. it is said, " If a woman have born a man child, then she shall be unclean seven days, and in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised." The child when circumcised would be a regular member of the Jewish church, and consequently could not touch the mother, without contracting ceremonial defilement. To obviate this difficulty, the circumcision was deferred till the eighth day. The language of the law then was, let the child be circumcised at as early an age as possible.

4. It has been objected to infant baptism, that if households are to be baptised, the heads of families are bound to have their servants or slaves baptised. Supposing this to be the case, I see no evil that would result from it. Should a West India planter, a man of real piety, come into the possession of as numerous a family of slaves as had father Abraham, would it be productive of any evil, if he should have them instructed in the principles of Christianity and baptised : that he should have them taught to read, and put the word of God into their hands : that he should set up among them the worship of God, on the sabbath : that he should watch over them as a father doth over his children, and laying aside for a season the distinction between master and slave, he would unite with them in the worship of God's house. Where would be the evil of it, would it be likely to be any dishonour to religion, or any injury to the poor slaves. Have we not

reason to believe that such a man, besides the rich reward he would receive in this life, by being made an instrument of good to his fellow-creatures, would be received by the Lord Jesus at last, with those gracious words—"Well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

5. It has been objected to infant baptism, that there is no positive precept enjoining it, and therefore we ought not to practise it. Had there been no previous revelation; and had God had no church in the world, before the coming of Christ, no doubt there would have been more explicit directions, as to the baptism of children. But as God had previously had a people in the world; and it was well known that children had always had a place among them, it does not appear that there was any necessity, for a particular command to baptise children, separate from the general command to baptise all nations.—Had the command run in this way—"Go proselyte all nations, circumcising them in the name of the God of Israel, &c. would it not have been perfectly intelligible to the apostles; Would they have needed a particular precept to circumcise infants; would they not have understood our Lord to mean, that they should proselyte and circumcise the children with the parents, as had been always the custom. Now as the gospel was substituted for the law of Moses, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost for the God of Israel, and baptism for circumcision; why should they need any particular precept for children in this case more than the other. When the Lord Jesus sent forth his apostles to proselyte and baptise, he did not destroy the Old Testament church and scriptures. The same church remained, and the Gentiles were to be gathered into it; and the same scriptures remained, except as the ceremonial law was abrogated, to be a treasure and a guide to the church in conjunction with the New Testament, till time shall end.

Hence the necessity of resorting to the old Testament scriptures, in conjunction with the New, to prove the necessity of keeping the first day of the week as the christian sabbath. Some of my brethren have said to me show

me a positive precept in the New Testament for the baptism of children, and I will obey it ; but nothing short of this will satisfy me. It does not appear to me, to manifest much humility or wisdom, for us to determine how an infinitely wise and gracious God shall reveal his will unto us. Would it not be more consistent for us to say I will search the scriptures, I will make use of the best means in my power, to enable me to understand them, and I will take such information as I can get, though it should not be exactly in that way, that I should expect. There have been a considerable number of conscientious persons, the seventh-day baptists, who refused to keep the first day of the week as the christian sabbath, because there was no positive precept for it in the New Testament, and they manifested much zeal in defending their practice, calling the first day of the week the christian idol ; but you are convinced that they were in an error, and that their zeal was without knowledge. And is there not a probability bréthren, that you also are reasoning upon false principles. One thing is certain, that no person can prove that the first day of the week, ought to be kept holy to the Lord as the christian sabbath, without having recourse to the Old Testament.

The Scotch baptists who keep the first day of the week, solely on the authority of the New Testament, only consider it as binding upon those, who have been baptised upon the profession of their faith, and who meet together to break bread, and upon no others. Hence they do not consider their families or their neighbours, under any obligation to keep it. Your opinion I presume is different.

—You consider it as of great importance, that the christian sabbath should be kept holy ; and that all the people of the land should lay aside their temporal concerns, and meet in the house of God for worship and for instruction. But you cannot prove the propriety of this in any other way, but by inferential reasoning. Whether you are not partial in this, and admit that evidence in the case of the sabbath which you reject in the case of baptism judge ye.

6. It is frequently objected to infant baptism, that baptism requires faith ; infants are incapable of faith, therefore they are not fit subjects for baptism. The answer to

this is easy.—Did not God require faith in adults, who were circumcised ; and yet he appointed circumcision to be administered to infants. The opinion that God did not require faith and repentance of the Israelites of old, who were circumcised, and performed the other ceremonial duties enjoined on them, reminds me of a scheme of divinity taught formerly by Dr. Gill and others. They taught that God might justly require of his creatures, to read his word, attend his worship, pray &c. but that he could not consistently require unregenerate persons to trust in him, love him or perform any spiritual acts of worship. Never could there be a scheme devised more calculated to lull men asleep in their sins or justify them in impenitence and unbelief than this ; or to take off the edge of divine truth and prevent it from commending itself to the consciences of men.

If God has no right to require unregenerate persons to repent, believe &c. he certainly will never punish them for refusing to do so. But is this the case ? Does not God now require all men every where to repent ; and will he not punish eternally all that finally refuse to do it. And did he not as truly require men to repent and believe, under the Old Testament as at present ? The idea that God did not require of his ancient people any thing more than external obedience, is derogatory to the character of God, to the religion of the Old Testament, and to his ancient people. There is no earthly king but requires his people to love him: there is no earthly parent, but requires his children to love him, and to obey from that principle. And shall we say that God would be satisfied with external homage, without the service of the heart when an earthly king or parent would not. It is true God generally deals with his creatures here, according to their external conduct ; but there is a day coming when he will judge the world in righteousness ; and then if we have acted the part of the hypocrite, we be unto us. I hope then brethren that this objection will be forever silenced, and that God's requiring faith in order to baptism in adults, will never be objected as forming any obstacle to the baptism of infants. It is often said, that infant baptism inverts the order of scripture, for while the scripture says, Believe and be baptised, this practice says be baptised and believe.—

This objection is drawn from Mark 16. 15, 16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." To understand these words aright, two things are necessary to be considered:

1. That this commission was peculiar to the Apostles,
2. That it has respect to persons who have come to years of understanding, and who had not been born of christian parents.

I have heard of some young brethren, who have asserted that this command was as much given to them as to the Apostles; but they were mistaken. We never read of any person being personally called after this time by the Lord Jesus to preach the gospel, except the apostle Paul. If this command were as much given to ministers now, as it was to the Apostles, the same signs would follow in them that believe: they would be able to cast out devils, &c.—See ver. 17, 18. The way in which we are to receive instruction from this command, is by way of inference. We justly infer that it is our duty as christians to send the gospel to the destitute as far as lies in our power.

Again, as this command was peculiar, to the apostles, so it had a special reference to adults who had not professed christianity. Were we to hear a person attempt to prove, that infants were damned who died in infancy, because it is said, "he that believeth not shall be damned;" we should say to him, you misapply your text, it only refers to adults, who hear the gospel and refuse to believe it. Now if this text does not prove, that infants may not be saved without faith, neither does it prove that they may not be baptised without faith; because it does not speak of infants. When our Lord sent out his apostles to preach the gospel, the whole world were either Jews or Gentiles. The first thing necessary to be done was to preach and to baptise those who believed; to this first duty, this command specially refers. But where our Lord gave the commission more fully, referring to the whole of their work, it includes infants—"Go proselyte all nations &c." And there is nothing in the one inconsistent with the other.

8. It is frequently objected to infant baptism, that it prevailed in dark ages, when the gospel was not understood ; but now when more light is enjoyed, it begins to be exploded. Could I believe that the prevalence of adult baptism, was the result of superior light I hope I should not oppose it, but with all my might contribute to spread its influence ; but I cannot believe this, and will assign my reasons.

1. My own case.—I am convinced that my embracing the principles of adult baptism, was not the result of superior light, but rather the want of it, I was placed in early life under baptist preaching, and derived benefit from it, became attached to the people, read their books and embraced their principles. But I had not the means to enable me to decide justly on this subject. I was like a judge deciding a case, after he has heard the evidences and the counsel on one side only. When I met with the pamphlet on baptism to which I replied, I had never read a good treatise on baptism, by a pedobaptist. The arguments in favour of adult baptism were familiar to me together with those scriptures that appear to countenance it ; but the arguments in favour of infant baptism, I had only seen occasionally as quoted by baptist writers, and replied to, or in other books occasionally, without ever reviewing them together. I had never thought much about the Old Testament dispensation ; and my ideas of it were quite confused. The pamphlet to which I replied was too short, to give a full view of the argument in favour of infant baptism ; and I was too confident that I was right, to be affected with the arguments that were brought forward. The principal benefit I derived from it was, that it set me to thinking for myself ; hence soon after I had published in reply to it, I began to discover that I knew but little of the subject, and to find my arguments fail me. Had not a weight of temporal business, together with my attachment to the people with whom I was connected, prevented my following out my first impressions, I should no doubt have much sooner arrived at an establishment on this subject. I do not however regret the years I spent among you my brethren. I hope they have not been altogether lost, and I feel more established in my present views from the length of time since I began to reflect on them.

That I have now a more just and enlarged view of the economy of Christ's visible kingdom in the world, and of the subjects of it than I formerly had, I feel as well persuaded as of my own existence,

But further, we know there have been many who embraced the principles of adult baptism, where it cannot be ascribed to any superior light. The first instance I believe on record, of any opposition to infant baptism, on the principles on which you my brethren oppose it, was in the sixteenth century, about the time of the reformation from Popery, when men were running to wild extremes in opposition to every thing that had been previously held sacred. Many of those who opposed it were Socinians, among which number was Servitus. Robertson states, that the Polish baptists were Socinians as he himself also was before he died. You will not think my brethren, that these people had any superior light. There also at present a sect in the United States called the no-rites, who pretend to some new revelation, who baptise their proselytes by immersion on a profession of faith.—This is certainly not in consequence of any scriptural light. I am **however** willing to admit that there are many good and useful men, who have embraced the principles of adult baptism. I do not however think that they have any more light than other good men; on the contrary I believe that what is good among them, has been principally derived from other denominations.

I recollect when I visited my father on his dying bed, not long after I had joined a baptist church, he observed that he did not like to see the baptists so hard upon their pedobaptist brethren, as they were under so much obligation to them for the information they derived from their works.—This is a true witness. I am sensible that the little knowledge I have of the bible has been under God, principally derived from pedobaptist writers; and I am persuaded this has been the case with you also. To whom do your young men repair to learn divinity? Is it not to Owen, Edwards, Dwight &c. And if there are any that do not repair to such men, for assistance to enable them to understand and explain the scriptures, I do not think they are the most remarkable for wisdom. Now is it not

surprising brethren, that you should have so much more light than your pedobaptist brethren, on the subject of baptism, and yet be obliged to borrow of their aid on other subjects. I saw not long since a proposal to publish in the United States Henry's Commentary, calculated for the meridian of the baptist church, by taking away the author's comment on those texts relating to baptism, and substituting for it, the comment of some baptist divine.— Now is it not surprising, that if this baptist brother could write so much better than the old pedobaptists on the subject of baptism, that he could not excel him on other points also. In short my brethren I am fully persuaded, that the light which induces men to reject infant baptism is altogether of an imaginary kind.

A persuasion is however general among you, that it is from the prevalence of scriptural light and knowledge, that the principles of adult baptism prevail. That all other denominations are resting their practice as it respects baptism on the authority of men, while yours is based on the scriptures of truth. I feel a persuasion that you are entirely mistaken on this subject, and that it is owing to want of knowledge of the true import of the scriptures, that infant baptism is opposed. But while you suppose you have more knowledge on this subject than others, it will have its effect and in many cases a mischievous effect. It is evident that notwithstanding man is so depraved, so guilty, so ignorant and so dependant a being, yet he is proud of his knowledge &c. and this is not only the case with unregenerate persons, but it cleaves fast to persons who are truly pious. Hence an apostle exhorted his brethren at Rome, not "to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think," but to think soberly of themselves, and especially "not to be wise in their own conceit." I speak as a friend my brethren, when I say that the indulgence of this idea of superior knowledge on the subject of baptism, as it is entirely groundless in my opinion; so it will be productive of very bad effects. I will only instance in one thing, viz the tendency it has to set the mind afloat, and lead it on to endless improvements in other things as well as baptism. It is well known that those men whom the christian world most highly venerates, and who have ever been considered the great lights of the

church ; and from whose writings in conjunction with the word of God, we have derived all our knowledge of God and divine things, were firm believers in infant baptism ; that they believed it was contained in the bible, and supported and defended it from the bible.

Now to assert that those men were all totally blind on the subject of baptism, and that they have entirely erred themselves, and led their readers into gross error on this subject, strikes a death-blow at their reputation as expositors of scripture. The man who believes this reasons thus.—These men have grossly erred as guides in one important point why not in others ; I know more than they all did on this subject, why should I not know more on other things also. The person is thus completely set afloat ; his confidence in the judgment of all the wise and good men who have gone before is completely destroyed, and he is ready to listen to the suggestions of his own fancy, or to any new and plausible theory that is suggested.—That this is not an imaginary evil that I have conjured up my brethren, the history of those who embrace the principles of adult baptism will clearly show. Benedict gives an instance of a person in the United States, who embraced the principles of adult baptism, liberated his slaves and seemed to promise a life of usefulness in the cause of the Redeemer. But his course was soon stopped ; he fell in with the writings of Swedenborg, eagerly embraced them, and spent great part of his ample property in printing a new edition of them. Nor is this a solitary case ; Winchester who preached the doctrines of universal salvation and Elias Smith of changeable memory, and many others who have embraced the doctrine of universal salvation, were first led to embrace the principles of adult baptism.

A most remarkable instance of this tendency of the principles of adult baptism to set the person afloat, and to lead to endless innovation, may be seen in the case of Mr. Alexr. Campbell. This gentleman was by education a pedobaptist ; but embraced the principles of adult baptism with great zeal. He held two or more public disputations on the subject, and was supposed to have put down all opposition. But was not contented to rest here ; having

served his time to the principles of adult baptism, he has now set up for himself. And as he in embracing baptist principles, so far as to believe in adult baptism, rejected the writings of all who have gone before him, on the subject of baptism ; so now he rejects their writings on every thing connected with religion.

It has been asserted in a periodical work, written upon the principles of Mr. Campbell ; and I presume in perfect harmony with his sentiments, " that it would have been well for the world, if there had never been any thing published on the subject of religion but the bible." According to this we should never have any songs of praise, to offer up to God in our worship : we should have no elementary instruction, no milk for babes to impart to our children. And if christianity were opposed and maligned by the talent and learning of the infidel, no christian must employ his pen in its defence. The god of this world might make all the use of the press he pleased in opposing christianity ; but the God of all the earth, from whom all useful arts and science have proceeded, must not use it in promoting the religion of the bible. Such are the monstrous conclusions at which men may arrive, by rejecting the wisdom of former ages, and boldly setting up their own in its stead. Farther Mr. Campbell being fully persuaded that though the New Testament has been 1800 years in the church, yet that it has never been understood ; has procured a new translation of it, in which he has not failed to have the word *baptise* rendered *immerse*. He now teaches as far as I can understand his writings, that there is no influence of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart, previous to the person's being baptised, upon the profession of his faith ; except as the Holy Spirit is in the scriptures. And also that remission of sins is suspended upon baptism, by immersion upon a profession of faith.

The consequence resulting from this would be, that there have been very few persons in the church of Christ, who have received remission of sins for many centuries.— Further it is easy to see that Mr. Campbell's theory is by no means complete ; it will need much improvement yet ; for if baptism washes away the sins that have been committed before baptism, no remedy seems to be provided for

subsequent sins. Farther, there seems no propriety in making such a distinction, between the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, as Mr. Campbell's scheme supposes ; viz that baptism should have even connected with it remission of sin and the gift of the Holy Ghost, while the Lord's supper should be simply a memorial of the death of our Lord. Consistency then seems to require that he should ascribe the same efficacy to the Lord's supper, in procuring the remission of sins after baptism, as he does to that ordinance in procuring the remission of those sins, which have preceded it. Mr. Campbell in mentioning Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, observed that Bunyan was a very good religious moral writer ; and that his pilgrims were a very good specimen of the disciples, that the clergy had been making for some hundred years. I must confess that I should prefer Bunyan's pilgrims to those made by Mr. Campbell ; if I were to judge by the spirit in which his books seem to be written. For a single individual to come forward and rail incessantly, against the dogmas of Calvin and Arminius, Whitfield and Wesley, and all other wise and good men who have been lights in their generation, seems to me to manifest neither modesty nor humility, but rather a spirit of self-conceit and censoriousness that promises but little edification from his works.

To say the truth, I think his writings calculated to shake men's faith, in all that has hitherto been held sacred by christians, to set them completely afloat on the sea of error ; and ultimately to drown them in infidelity, You perhaps will be ready to say, we condemn his errors as much as any person. True my brethren, but you when you teach young persons to renounce the instructions, which those writers to whom I refer, give on the subject of baptism ; and that they by examining a few texts in the New Testament are better qualified to judge on this subject, than were such men as Owen, and Edwards, and Doddridge and Scott &c. lead them the first step in that way which tends to the rejection of the wisdom of past ages, and the substitution of some new scheme of divinity or infidelity in its place.

I remain &c.

LETTER IX

BELOVED BRETHREN,

Having shown the firm foundation on which the practice of infant baptism rests, and obviated those objections against it which have occurred to me ; I proceed to state those benefits that flow from it.

1. It tends to glorify God, the first and greatest object in all the works of Jehovah. When parents present their children to be baptised, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, it speaks this language. Gracious God, we have received these dear children from thee to be brought up for thee ; we dedicate them to thee. Let thy name be called upon them ; let the Spirit and the blood represented by this baptismal water, purify their hearts ; let them be disciples of thy Son. May they be watched over and protected by thy providence ; may they glorify thee on earth, and be glorified with thee in heaven. There is something so natural and proper in this, and so in accordance with the feelings of christian parents, and with the economy of grace under every dispensation ; that some baptists have practised something resembling it, by having their children offered up to God in prayer. But it has generally fallen into disuse, because it was feared it would too much countenance infant baptism.

2. It affords a ground of hope to parents, whose children die in infancy. When our first parents broke that covenant, under which they were placed, " judgment came upon all men to condemnation." There is therefore no possibility of salvation by that covenant, either for ourselves or our children. But when we see God entering into covenant with his servant Abraham, in which he promised to be the God of him and his seed, and the token of the covenant administered to his children ; we must infer that there is provision made in that covenant, for the salvation of children as well as parents ; baptism being

now the seal of the same covenant speaks the same language.

3. It tends to promote religion in various ways in families, and in the church, by laying additional obligations upon parents, ministers and private christians, to instruct and pray for the children, thus dedicated to God and placed in his visible church.

4. It tends to perpetuate christianity, in the families of those who embrace it. When God established a church in the family of Abraham, and afterwards added the law to the promises, he determined that Judaism or the religion of the Old Testament should continue till the introduction of a new dispensation; and one great means of effecting this was circumcision, which preserved them a distinct people from idolaters, and taught them to worship the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and led them to adhere to the scriptures, which contained the covenants, the promises, the giving of the law, the service of God &c. Now if infant circumcision answered so valuable a purpose under the Old Testament, why should not infant baptism answer the same purpose under the present dispensation. It will not be doubted but that christianity is as valuable as Judaism, and as necessary to be preserved in the world; and that it has as many and as powerful enemies, and that God makes use of as suitable means to preserve and promote it. Some have spoken with much contempt of infant baptism, as having a tendency to promote hereditary christianity; but I would ask whether hereditary christianity, be not better than hereditary heathenism.

In reflecting upon this subject, it appears to me that christianity would never have come down to us thro' the ages of darkness and ignorance, it has passed through—humanly speaking, had it not been for infant baptism. The principles of adult baptism make no provision for the continuance of christianity in a dark time; where religion would languish, and no adults come forward to be baptised, the visible church would soon become extinct by the death of its members. There would then be scarcely any thing to remind the people, that God has sent his Son to die for sinners; as there would be no baptised persons, there would be no celebration of the Lord's supper, nor could

there be any persons ordained to the work of the christian ministry. And as before the discovery of the art of printing, copies of the scriptures were scarce; there would be hardly any thing to draw the attention of the people to religion. So that without some miraculous interposition of divine providence, christianity would under such circumstances become extinct. Hence it appears that infant baptism has answered a most valuable end, in keeping up a profession of christianity among the descendants of christians, and securing their attachment to that religion into which they had been baptised in infancy.

5. As infant baptism recognises the right of the infant, to a place in the visible church of Christ, so it makes it reasonable that this child as it grows up, should contribute to the support of the public worship of God, and should attend the means of instruction provided in the church.— This is calculated to be a benefit both to the church and the individual: to the church by assisting in supporting the necessary expences of the public worship of God: to the individual by enabling him to participate in the advantages of the instruction and worship of the house of God. The difference is great between the two systems in this respect: adult baptism leaves the whole weight of expence resulting from building places of worship, supporting the ministry, &c. upon those who have been baptised in adult years—perhaps not a twentieth part of the population; while the principles of infant baptism, unite all who have been baptised in infancy in this duty. That the principles of adult baptism would not work well in this respect might reasonably be expected: for there is no propriety in supposing that persons will do much for the support of the gospel, who do not profess to believe it, and who are not in any sense members of the visible church. That it does not work well I am fully convinced.—There is no denomination of christians, who do so little in a pecuniary way for the support of religion as the Baptists, in proportion to their numbers, property and piety, so far as my knowledge extends. And what is the reason of this? Their system is bad; they throw away the advantages that God would give them, by bringing their children into his house and engaging them in contributing to its support. I find in reading the minutes of the eastern Maine Baptist associ-

ation, the number of churches to be thirty-five, and the number of ordained ministers to be fifteen; being less than one minister to two churches. The circular letter was also on the support of the ministry, and heavy complaints were made of the backwardness of the people in this respect.—Is there not a cause?

Let us look at this subject on a larger scale, where the effect of the system will be more clearly seen. According to the accounts I have met with from the United States, it appears there are more communicants of the baptist denomination, than of the congregationalist in that country; but I should judge from what information I have obtained, that the latter denomination do five times as much as the former in erecting places of worship, supporting ministers, educating pious young men for the ministry, supporting Sunday schools, distributing bibles and tracts, supporting missions among the heathen &c. The fact is, that the system of adult baptism is better calculated for pulling down pedobaptist churches and forming new ones, than it is for sustaining those that are formed, and holding forth instruction to the rising generation. I entreat your attention to this subject my brethren; you would wish to promote the cause of religion, and to do good in the world: examine carefully whether you are not cutting the sinews of your strength to do so, and that of others also, by opposing infant baptism.

6. It tends not only to perpetuate religion among the families which have embraced it, but also to enlarge the borders of the church, and to make the profession of christianity general. God from the first establishment of a visible church in the world, provided means for its enlargement, not only by the increase of the family that composed it, but by the addition of Gentile families, which came to take shelter under the shadow of the wings of the Lord God of Israel. And so under the Gospel dispensation, when Lydia, the jailor and Stephanus gave themselves to the Lord, they gave their households also,

The advantages of a general profession of christianity are very great to any country; it has an influence upon the laws, christianity is recognised as the religion of the

land, the first day of the week is established by law as a day of rest and worship, the darkness of idolatry is expelled, the bible is introduced into every family and into every school, books, tracts &c. follow, places of worship are erected, the church-going bells from a thousand hills summon the people to the worship of God on the christian sabbath; and thus the light of divine truth, is brought to bear upon the whole mass of mind. Had the principles of adult baptism been always acted upon, I do not believe there would ever have been a nation that could have been called christian.—It is certain that we have no reason to believe, there has ever been a nation, in which the majority of the adults have been truly pious; and had none professed christianity but pious persons, they would not have been able to influence the laws, or to have established the first day of the week, as a day of rest and worship; consequently there would have been no general attendance on the house of God on the sabbath, and the bulk of the people must have remained ignorant of christianity.

If infant baptism be calculated to produce those effects under the divine blessing, which I have attributed to it, and actually does concur in producing them; it is a strong additional proof that it is of God, for no invention of men would produce such effects. It will follow also that infant baptism, is by no means that trifling unmeaning thing that many suppose it to be. The circumcision of a Jewish infant of eight days old, seemed to be a thing of little importance, but God saw fit to order it; and the prosperity and perpetuity of religion, were closely connected with its observance. In like manner, the baptism of an infant which is entirely unconscious of what is taking place may seem to the superficial observer an empty form; but to the person who traces it to its source, and views the wisdom and goodness of God in its appointment, and its salutary results: it will appear as it truly is, a duty and a privilege; and will be valued and practised, and a blessing sought upon it, from Him who appointed it.

I remain &c.

LETTER X

BELOVED BRETHREN,

I might here have closed these letters, were it not that there is not only a difference of opinion between baptists and pedobaptists respecting the subjects of baptism, but also as to the mode by which water is applied in this ordinance. It is believed by pedobaptists generally, that baptism is rightly administered by sprinkling or pouring; you on the other hand, contend that it can only be rightly administered by immersion of the whole body in water. As I formerly agreed with you as to the mode as well as subjects of baptism, you will naturally expect that I shall assign my reasons for a change of sentiment. This is the more necessary, as I formerly felt a greater confidence that we were right in the mode than in the subjects of baptism. But my opinion is greatly altered in this respect; I now believe that I was misled, partly by relying too much on the opinion of some whom I respected, and partly by taking for granted that certain expressions in scripture which seem favourable to immersion, really proved it. It is evident that the meaning of the word used by our Lord, when he appointed this ordinance, is the first thing to be enquired into in deciding this question. Some contend that the word used by our Lord, means to immerse invariably, and that it ought to have been so translated; and that this would have prevented the dispute which has arisen on this subject. That the word baptise, does not however invariably signify to immerse, will I think be evident to candid persons from the following considerations:

1. That our translators did not so render it. Our present translation of the bible, was effected by forty-seven persons chosen for that purpose. That they were men of learning, of talents and of sound judgment, appears from the translation itself, and which is thought by competent judges, to be one of the best translations of the scriptures which has ever been effected. It farther appears from the fact, that though the Bible has been much studied since, no translation has been made that has been thought to be better.

It appears then that those forty-seven persons, did not think that the word baptise invariably meant to immerse, or they would have so rendered it. It may be said, that the practice of sprinkling which then obtained, prevented them from acting according to their judgment. But would it not be a most uncharitable thing to suppose, that this number of wise and good men, to whom was entrusted a work of so much importance, should be deterred from acting according to their judgment, by the practice of the times ; especially when we consider that their translating it immerse, would have been in accordance with the liturgy of the Church of England.

It may then be taken for granted, that our translators did not believe that the word baptise invariably signified to immerse, or they would have so translated it ; this further appears from the fact, that wherever they have translated it, they have not rendered it *immerse* but *wash*.—See Heb 9. 10, Mark 7. 3, 4, Luke 11. 38. There appears no doubt then, but that had our translators been under a necessity of translating it, they would have rendered it *wash* or *wet*.

There is also one undeniable instance in the Greek translation, of the Old Testament, where *bapto*, the word from which baptise is derived, means *wet*—Dan. 5. 21—“ His body was *wet* with the dew of heaven.”

But it will be said, that there are some learned men of opinion, that baptise means invariably to immerse ; and that it should have been so rendered.—Be it so. There are always some men both learned and unlearned, who are of a sanguine turn of mind, and who in a disputed case will look only at the arguments on one side of the question, and who will be very certain where there are no grounds for certainty. But why should you my brethren receive so implicitly, the decisions of such men and reject the opinions of others equally learned, who are of different opinion. Is it not because the one agrees with your theory, and the other differs from it ? Are you not then partial judges, receiving evidences on one side and rejecting them on the other : hearing counsel on one side and refusing to hear it on the other.

Mr Scott on this subject says, "Some contend that baptism always signifies immersion, and learned men who have regarded Jewish traditions, more than either the language of scripture or the Greek idiom, are very decided in this respect ; but the use of the words *baptise* and *baptism* in the New Testament, cannot accord with this exclusive interpretation." It is said that those learned men referred to, were influenced in their judgment by the opinions of the Jewish writers, who in the baptism of proselytes, insisted very particularly on their being totally immersed ; and also by the general practice of immersion by the christian church in after ages ; But neither of these ought to decide in this case. What we want to ascertain, is the meaning of the word as used in the scriptures. The Jewish writers are known to have been superstitious men who loved to bind heavy burdens on other men's shoulders, and who would probably insist upon immersion where sprinkling or pouring would have been sufficient. Neither are we bound to follow the practice of the christian church in after ages, any further than they followed Christ. It is also worthy of observation, that it does not appear that immersion was ever thought essential to baptism, even when it was generally practised ; and in cases of supposed necessity, pouring or sprinkling were practised.

I will then again observe, that if our translators have never translated the word *baptise* to *immerse* ; but have either given the word as it is in the original or have translated it *wash* it is a strong proof that it does not invariably signify immerse.

But further, that it does not invariably signify immerse, evidently appears from those passages, where it is translated *wash*. In Heb 9. 10. it evidently appears to refer to those sprinklings with blood and water, mentioned by the apostle in the context, and to the various applications of them under the law.

On thoother passages referred to, I shall transcribe from Mr. Pond.* It is said "of the Pharisees and all the Jews," that "when they come from the market except they wash or (Greek) be *baptised* they eat not."—Mark 7.

* Page 31, 32, 33.

3, 4. And when a certain Pharisee had invited our Lord "to dine with him, he marvelled that he had not first washed or (Greek) been *baptised* before dinner." Was it a custom with all the Jews to be *immersed* before eating; or did the Pharisee marvel that our Lord was not *immersed* before eating. If the case does not speak for itself, it is easy to prove, and from the highest authority, that immersions were not statedly practised before their meals, but merely a *washing of their hands*. Math. 15. 2.—"Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders; for they *wash not their hands* when they *eat bread*."

Mark 7. 3 "The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they *wash their hands* oft they *eat not*."

Maimonides—"A man shall not need to wash his hands as oft as he eats, if he do not go abroad or meddle with business, or go to the market, or avert his mind another way; but if he do he is bound to wash his hands as oft as there is need of washing."

Dictionary of the Bible—"The Hebrews did not so much as *eat*, nor even *sit down to a table* till after they had *washed their hands*, by pouring water from their finger's ends up to their elbows"

Calmet—"The precise professors among the Hebrews, *washed their arms* up to their elbows, when returned home from market or out of the street, fearing they had touched some polluted thing or person."

In view of these quotations, is it not undeniably certain that the *baptisms* which the Jews practised previous to their meals, and which the Pharisee marvelled that our Saviour should neglect, were merely a *washing of the hands*; and is not here sufficient evidence, that the term denoting baptism, is used to signify something different from a total immersion.

Mr. Judson indeed supposes, that it was a custom with the Jews to *immerse* themselves before eating; and in confirmation of this, he quotes Maimonides and Scaliger p. 7. His quotation from Maimonides is not at all to his purpose; The opinion of this learned Rabbi has been given above. Nor is the testimony of Scaliger much

more in point. The Evangelist says of *all* the Jews, that "except they be *baptised* they eat not;" while Scaliger does not intimate that *dipping* prevailed, except among "the more superstitious *part*."

It is also said by the Evangelist, Mark 7. 4, that "there be many other things which the Jews have received to hold, as the washing or (Greek) *baptisms* of cups and pots, and brazen vessels and of tables." If it is likely that in washing they immersed their small cups, is it at all likely that they immersed their pots and kettles, their brazen vessels and their tables. Do we find this the most convenient method of washing such articles; and especially, should we if after the Jewish custom we reclined at our meals, and of consequence were obliged to construct our tables much larger than they are at present. Accordingly Pool determines in view of the word *baptism* in this verse, "that it does not always denote *immersion*, but sometimes *washing* only or even *sprinkling*." The Jews derived this custom of frequently *baptising* their domestic utensils, not from the law of Moses, but "*the traditions of their elders*,"—See v. 5. Hence Mr. Judson's references to the law of Moses, to prove that these baptisms were uniformly immersions, are perfectly irrelevant.

From what has been said, it appears to be evident that the words *baptise* and *baptism*, do not in the New Testament always signify *immerse* or *immersion*; and if the sacred writers do not use them always in that sense, who has a right to impose that sense on them.

But besides the opinion of our translators, that the word *baptise* does not always mean *immerse*, and the proofs that we have from the New Testament to the same effect; I shall quote the following authorities:—

Alstedius—"The term baptism signifies both immersion and sprinkling, and of consequence ablution."

Zelenus—"They are rightly baptised, who are baptised by sprinkling."

Beza—"Baptism signifies dipping, and also sprinkling."

J. Wickliffe—"It matters not, whether persons are dipped once or three times, or whether water were poured upon their heads."

Whitaker—"The word (Greek) baptise, signifies not only to dip ; but also to tinge or wet."

Mastricht—"Baptism signifies washing, either by sprinkling or dipping."

Leigh—"Baptism is such a kind of washing, as is by plunging ; and yet it is taken more largely for any kind of washing, even where there is no dipping at all."

Lightfoot—"The application of water, is of the essence of baptism ; but the application of it in this or that manner, speaks but a circumstance."

Dr. Featly—"Christ no where requireth dipping, but only baptising ; which word Hezychius, Stephanus, Scapula and Buddeus those great masters of the Greek tongue, make good by very many instances out of the classical writers, importeth no more than ablution or washing."

Dominicus—"In baptism there is something essential, as the washing, and something accidental, namely the washing in this or the other manner."

Witsius—"We are not to imagine that immersion is so essential to baptism, that it cannot be duly performed by pouring water all over, or by aspersion."

Dr. Owen—"Baptism is any kind of washing, either by dipping or sprinkling."

Flavel—"The word baptise signifying as well to wash as to plunge ; a person may be truly baptised that is not plunged."

Dictionary of the Bible—"To baptise, is to sprinkle or wash one's body sacramentally."

Glas—"Immersion cannot be called baptism, any otherwise than as it is a mode of washing with water."

Dr. Thomas Scott—Some contend that baptism always signifies immersion, and learned men who have regarded Jewish traditions, more than either the language of scripture or the Greek idiom ; are very decided in this respect. But the use of the words baptise and baptism in the new testament, cannot accord with this exclusive interpretation."

Dr. Adam Clark—"To say that sprinkling is no gospel baptism, is as incorrect as to say immersion is none ; such assertions are as unchristian as they are uncharitable.—

Those who are dipped in water in the name of the Trinity, I believe to be baptised ; those who are washed or sprinkled with water, in the name of the Trinity, I believe to be equally so ; and the repetition of such a baptism, I believe to be profane. Others have a right to believe the contrary, if they see good."

Besides these authors Mr. Pond refers to the following as testifying that immersion is not essential to baptism.—Luther, Vossius, Zanchius, Hesychius, Buddeus, Stephanus, Scapula, Passon, Martyn, Pool, Henry, Doddridge, Hopkins &c.

Mr. Pond's treatise has been several years before the public ; I am not aware that it has been ever replied to, or that the genuineness or the authenticity of those quotations, has ever been disputed. We here then see that a large number of the most learned, able and pious men, that have ever been found in the christian church, since the days of the apostles ; have given their opinion, that immersion is not essential to baptism ; that the words baptise and baptism as used by the sacred writers, in the new testament, cannot be confined to that exclusive sense ; but are used where sprinkling or pouring are intended.—Can we believe that these men, have all entered into a conspiracy to set aside an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to substitute something of their own invention in its stead ; and that they have designedly led so large a portion of the christian church into a gross error. If we can have no confidence in such men as Calvin, Luther, Beza, Owen, Pool, Henry, Doddridge, Hopkins, Scott, Clarke &c. in whom shall we repose confidence. Shall we say as David did in his haste, "all men are liars." But you will probably say they may have been mistaken, the prejudice of education may have misled them. This is indeed possible ; all men are liable to error and to be under the influence of prejudice. But they had as good means of judging right as any men, who have lived in their day ; many of them are also known to have been men of great piety and candour ; I will name three Doddridge, Scott and Clarke. Dr. Doddridge is known to have been a man who had a thorough knowledge of the Greek language, effected a new translation of the new testament

and wrote a commentary upon it ; which is highly esteemed by christians of all protestant denominations. He was also a man of eminent piety and candour, and had no prejudice against immersion, as appears by his consenting to baptism by immersion, when the members of his church wished it.

Mr. Scott is also well known as a man of great learning, candour, piety and soundness of judgment ; he laboured in revising and improving his commentary, until his last illness. Dr. Clarke is also known to have been a man of piety and of great learning, and who made the study and the exposition of the scriptures, the business of his life. These are all modern writers ; they were no strangers to the arguments used in favour of immersion.— Yet their deliberate judgment, was that sprinkling or pouring was scriptural baptism. Thus they administered baptism to their own children, and the children of their brethren in Christ ; and thus they recommend it to others by their example and in their writings. Can it be supposed my brethren, that you are better acquainted with the scriptures, have more love to them, or are more free from prejudice or from being biassed by other men, than were these men.

It is believed and frequently asserted among you my brethren, that pedobaptists are doubtful of the truth of their own system, both as it regards the mode and subjects of baptism, that they are almost ashamed to defend it, and that nothing but tradition causes them to adhere to it ; and especially that they almost all are obliged to acknowledge, that immersion is the only scriptural mode of baptism. But you may be assured, that this is entirely fallacious, and only tends to deceive those who believe it ; and ought never to be asserted. Any person may convince himself of this, by reading any of the late commentaries on the scriptures or treatises on baptism by pedobaptists. Much of this opinion has resulted from quotations, made from the writings of learned men among the pedobaptists, and published in controversial works on the side of adult baptism.

Mr. Booth of London was a man of very extensive reading, and as he was a zealous advocate for immersion, he

extracted from the writings of pedobaptists, every thing that he could find favourable to it. From his publications on the subject, most of the instances have been taken, in which it has been supposed that pedobaptists have conceded that immersion was the only scriptural mode of baptism. But on this subject, much misunderstanding exists. Mr. Booth in his publication "desired his readers to observe, that no inconsiderable part of these learned authors have asserted, that the word *baptism* signifies *pouring* or *sprinkling*, as well as immersion." But those who have copied from Mr. Booth, have adduced the evidence of those learned men in favour of immersion; but have suppressed their testimony in favour of pouring or sprinkling. This bears a very partial and even false impression upon the mind of the reader who is led to believe that these learned men taught that baptism signifies exclusively immersion. On this subject I beg leave to transcribe the observations of Mr. Pond, as more to the purpose than any thing I could write. Speaking of Mr. Judson, he says: "In respect to these quotations, and indeed to his quotations generally, from pedobaptist authors, he does not seem to have treated either the public or his witnesses fairly. In selecting small quotations from large works, when saving clauses, qualifying sentences &c. are omitted, authors may easily be made to speak a language which they never intended; and unfair impressions may be left on the public mind Mr. J. has left the impression and we fear he designed to leave it, that those learned men whose testimony he has adduced, really supposed immersion the only valid baptism. He ought to have known and to have acknowledge the contrary. We *certainly know** that a number of his witnesses, and we *seriously* believe that all of them, considered baptism perfectly valid, when performed by pouring, washing or sprinkling.

Mr. Booth from whom nearly all the quotations of Mr. J. in this place as well as others are servilely copied, particularly "desired his reader to observe, that no inconsiderable part of these learned authors have asserted that the word *baptism* signifies pouring or sprinkling as well as immersion." Mr. Booth's treatment of his witnesses has

* Compare the authors we have quoted and referred to, with those Mr. J. has quoted, p 5

been generally reprobated as unfair, but in comparison with that of Mr. J. it was *candour itself*. This latter gentleman has taken up the writings of the dead, separated from them sentences which they perhaps incautiously dropped, and spread those before the world as their prevailing sentiments. He has thus tortured those who can no longer speak for themselves, to utter a language which they never intended. If he has allowed them to declare what they considered the truth, he has not allowed them to declare what they considered the *whole* truth. With these things in view, the quotations of Mr. J. on which he seems to have so much relied, have lost all their force. The question between him and us, is not whether immersion be baptism, or whether this mode be preferable to any other; but *is it essential*. With united voice his witnesses will answer *No*; and thus answering, they instantly desert him and stand arrayed on the other side."

I do not make this quotation with a view to injure the character of Mr. Booth or Mr. Judson, I respect the memory of Mr. Booth as that of a wise and good minister of Jesus Christ; I also feel unfeigned respect and affection for Mr. Judson, as one who has laboured and has not fainted, and who has suffered much for the name's sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who has lifted up the Saviour as an ensign to the people in distant heathen⁷lands; but I do it to shew the true state of the case: to shew that there are but few if any learned men among pedobaptists, who believe that baptism means exclusively immersion; to shew that we have the most satisfactory and ample proof, from the writings of wise and good men generally in the christian church, that baptism does not exclusively mean immersion. Having established this point,

I remain &c.

Amos A. Phelps

LETTER XI.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

Having in my last shewn the opinion of wise and good men, as to the meaning of the word baptism; I proceed to shew from other sources, that immersion is not essential to baptism.

1. I shall shew that this has never been the opinion of those, who have generally practised immersion in the christian church of any denomination, until within two or three centuries.

Pond, p. 42—"Mr. Judson quotes the venerable president of the council of Trent, testifying to the existence of the anabaptists so early as the fourth century—p. 35. An anabaptist is one who rebaptises. We freely admit then that there were those in the fourth century, and have been others at different periods, who administered and received a second baptism. Some have been rebaptised because they doubted the *purity of the church* in which they first received baptism. This was particularly the case with the Donatists; some have been baptised because they doubted the *qualification of the officer* who first administered to them the ordinance; in this sense anabaptism has been practised in the church of Rome. But I can find no instance of a second baptism, because *the first was not immersion*, till the appearance of the anabaptists in the sixteenth century."

He also quotes two learned baptists, Robinson and the author of letters to Bishop Hoadly, as acknowledging that sprinkling had always been practised; and held as valid baptism in cases of necessity, previous to the reformation from popery. If this can be disproved it certainly ought to be.—If it cannot, it must be admitted that your opinion, that immersion is essential to baptism, is a novel one; neither supported by the import of the word, nor by the sentiments of any denomination of christians, for nearly sixteen hundred years after the institution of christian baptism.

2. That the meaning of the word baptism is not invariably immersion, may be inferred from the circumstances connected with its administration. When our Lord sent forth his disciples to proselyte and to baptise the nations, he certainly knew all the circumstances connected with the administration of baptism till the end of time. He knew the numbers that would embrace christianity, and the circumstances in which they would be placed. He knew that to the administration of baptism by immersion to adults, a considerable quantity of water would be wanted; a change of clothes and suitable places for changing would also be generally needed; a considerable portion of time would be necessary also, when the number of candidates would be great. Our Lord also knew that in some parts of the earth, it would be extremely difficult to find water in sufficient quantities for immersion, and in other parts of the earth the extreme cold would prevent baptism by immersion, at least in the open air, for a considerable part of every year; he also knew that ill health would frequently prevent baptism by immersion, both as it respects the administration and the candidates. And as our Lord intended his religion to extend to the ends of the earth, and to the latest period of time; can we reasonably believe, that he would enjoin a practice so difficult, so impossible to be performed under many circumstances.— There were many things connected with Judaism, which shewed that that dispensation was intended to be local and temporary; its adult professors for instance were required to go up to Jerusalem every year; but it is not so with christianity. The Hindoo, the Hottentot and the Greenlanders, may all share in its blessings, God may be worshiped in spirit and truth, through the mediation of the Son and by the influence of the Spirit, by men of every clime. Can we then believe without good evidence, that the Lord Jesus would appoint as the initiatory ordinance of christianity, a rite which in many circumstances would be so extremely difficult of performance; and that in many cases a person in order to be baptised, must wait a number of months, go a long journey or submit to much expence; especially when we consider that “unto the poor the gospel would be preached.” Circumcision was a painful rite, but under many circumstances would be easier of performance than baptism by immersion; as it

would not be hindered by a want of water, by extreme cold, or even by a poor state of health. The difficulties connected with the administration of baptism by immersion, in many climates and circumstances, furnish us then with a strong reason to believe, that when our Lord instituted the ordinance of christian baptism, he did not confine it to immersion.

We shall proceed to examine those instances of the administration of baptism, recorded in the new testament, after its institution by our Lord, previous to his ascension to glory. There can be no doubt but that the apostles perfectly understood our Lord's command, and that their practice if we can ascertain that, will be a guide to us.—When the circumstances are such, as appear to be favourable to the practice of immersion, such as John's baptising at Enon, where there was much water ; or the parties being said to go down into the water, and come up out of the water, you are very ready to plead them as proofs, that baptism was performed by immersion. You ought to be equally willing to examine those places, where the circumstances are favourable to some other mode, and let them also have their due weight. The very first instance that we have on record, of baptism being administered after the apostles were commissioned to proselyte and baptise the nations, was under such circumstances, that it is utterly impossible for any person to point out any probable way, by which it could be administered by immersion. The place, twenty miles distant from Jordan or Enon or any other place that is known that would be suitable for immersion : the number baptised, 3000 : the time only a part of the day after the preaching ; all unpremeditated so that there could have been no place provided beforehand. The candidates also unprovided with any change of clothes : the number authorised to administer baptism, no more as we have reason to think than the twelve apostles.

The arguments that have been used to prevent this conclusion, are so weak that they shew the impossibility of it. It has been said, a sufficient quantity of water might have been found in the brazen sea kept in the temple, for the washing of the priests. But a moment's reflection will

convince us, that it would have been death for any person who was not a priest, to have attempted such a thing as to have been immersed in that sea, kept sacred for the use of the priests in their ministrations. It has also been suggested, that tanks might have been found in different parts of Jerusalem for the purpose ; but there is not the smallest intimation, that they ever went from the spot to be baptised ; much less that they scattered all over Jerusalem, to find places for such a purpose. Again it has been suggested, that probably a great part of them, had been baptised by John, and therefore would not need baptism ; or that they might have been added to the disciples by profession, and not have been baptised the same day.—But the words of the sacred writer are directly opposed to such a conclusion.—He says, “ they that gladly received his word were baptised.” Now it is certain that none could have been added to them by profession, without gladly receiving the word ; and he declares that as many as did so, were baptised. Neither is there any exception made in favour of John’s disciples, but it is expressly said as many as gladly received the word were baptised.

It has also been thought that more were employed in baptising than the twelve apostles ; but there is no reason from scripture to conclude, that any but the twelve apostles, the accredited witnesses of our Lord’s death and resurrection, were employed either in preaching or baptising on the day of pentecost. It does not follow, that because our Lord had sent out seventy disciples previous to his death, to preach in his name, that they had authority to preach and baptise into a profession of christianity, under the new dispensation. It appears evident I think, that the commission to proselyte and baptise the nations, was given alone to the eleven apostles by our Lord ; to these was added a twelfth chosen by lot by the eleven.—These twelve were the only persons, that at first had any official authority in the church of God ; hence even the temporal cares of the church devolved upon them, until seven deacons were chosen and authorised by the apostles. There is no reason to believe, that any persons were authorised by the apostles to assist them in their labours, previous to the seven deacons being chosen ; hence it fol-

lows, that none but the twelve apostles preached or baptised on the day of Pentecost. And the conclusion seems equally evident, that the candidates for baptism, must have stood together in ranks, and water must have been sprinkled or poured upon them by the apostles, in a manner corresponding with ancient predictions; when Jehovah declared, that he would sprinkle many nations, that he would sprinkle clean water upon them, and they should be clean, &c.

This conclusion will be greatly strengthened, by referring to Heb. 9. 10, where the apostle speaks of divers washings or *baptisms*, which had been practised under the law; and referring to one of those baptisms, he says v. 19. 20, "When Moses had spoken every precept according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and *sprinkled* both the book and all the people; saying this is the blood of the testament or covenant, which God hath enjoined unto you." The attentive student of scripture, will see a wonderful coincidence of circumstances, between the event referred to by the apostle and the baptism of the 3000; the first fruits of the Jewish nation on the day of Pentecost. In the first instance as recorded, Ex. 24 we find the Jewish nation formally entering into covenant with God, by being sprinkled with blood and water—for almost all things under the law were purged by blood; on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, we find 3000 of the descendants of those people, being the first fruits unto God and the Lamb, entering into the new covenant by being sprinkled with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

In Acts 4. 4, it is said that the number of them who believed were about 5000. And again chap. 5. 14, believers were the more added to the Lord *multitudes*, both of men and women. Here all the difficulties in the way of baptism by immersion, would have to be accounted for, again and again.

If we attend to the baptism of individuals or families, there is nothing that would lead us to suppose, that these baptisms were performed by immersion, except the case of the Ethiopian eunuch.

In the 9th chap. of Acts, we have an account of the baptism of the apostle Paul. He had been three days without sight in the house of Judas, during which time he had neither ate nor drank ; when Ananias came in and put his hands on him, addressing him in the name of the Lord Jesus, there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, " and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptised."—Acts 9. 18. There is not the smallest hint given here, that would lead us to believe that Paul ever went out of the room ; and it is immediately added, " when he had received meat he was strengthened." The natural inference is, that he was baptised by sprinkling or pouring.

In the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, recorded in the 8th chap. of Acts, it will be admitted that the circumstances are not unfavourable to baptism by immersion ; still there is nothing that can prove it in this instance. Their coming to a certain water was not premeditated, it was as they went on their way, that they came to a certain water. The sight reminded the eunuch of his duty and privilege of being baptised, in the name of the Holy Trinity ; and thus taking upon him a profession of that faith, which he had so cordially embraced. His heart was full of love to that Jesus, of whom he had been reading, and whom Philip had preached unto him ; and he delayed not, but made haste to obey God's commandments. Whether there were a sufficient depth of water in this place for immersion, we do not certainly know ; if there were, it was so far favourable for immersion. Its being said, that they both went down into the water, is also so far favourable to immersion ; but it is not decisive for two reasons :

1. It is not certain that they actually went into the water.—It appears from the statements given by those who are most conversant with the Greek, that the particles translated *into* and *out of* the water, are not so precise and definite as they are in the English ; but may be translated *to* and *from*. The instances given of this, seem to make it undeniable.

2. If they did both go into the water, it is not certain that the eunuch was immersed. To go into the water is one thing, to be baptised is another ; if the word *baptised*

doe snot invariably signify *immersed* it cannot be proved that the eunuch was immersed. It certainly would seem to be inconvenient, for the eunuch to be baptised in his clothes, and then to go immediately into his chariot and sit there in wet garments; nothing is said of his changing his garments, nor does there appear to have been any convenience for it. The most that can be said in this case is, that the circumstances are not so unfavourable for immersion, as they are in all the other instances, which are recorded after our Lord's resurrection.

The baptism of the jailor and his household is so recorded, that it leaves no reason to believe, that it was by immersion. The hour was midnight; there is no mention of their going out of the jail to baptise, nor is it probable that the jailor could consistently have permitted his prisoners to go out to any distance from the jail, where they had been confined by order of the magistrates. It is recorded in these words, "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes and was baptised, he and all his straightway."—Acts 16. 33. The natural inference is, they were baptised by sprinkling or pouring; without leaving the room, where they washed the stripes of Paul and Silas.

The baptism of Cornelius and his friends,—Acts 10, is thus recorded—"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we. And he commanded them to be baptised, in the name of the Lord." There is no mention here of going out of the house, and there is no reason to believe that they went out of the room; but that they were immediately baptised by sprinkling or pouring. When we read in the new testament of these numerous baptisms, if we suppose them to have been performed by sprinkling or pouring, all seems natural and easy to be understood.—But if we suppose them all to be immersions we are continually led to enquire, how can these circumstances be made to agree with it: when was water, and time, and persons to be found to accomplish it: were all these persons baptised in their clothes &c. The difficulty is increased when we consider, that those baptisms never appear to be deferred an hour after their professing faith—if they believed at midnight, they were baptised the same hour.

Those who practise baptism by immersion in this country, find it attended with many difficulties, though there is probably more than ten times the water that is to be found in Judea. The baptist church in Halifax, tho' a seaport town, generally found it necessary before they provided a font in their place of worship, to go some miles for baptism. And I believe very few would believe that twelve persons could have baptised 3000 in a part of a day, tho' there is much water there. I am also acquainted with a ministering brother, whose health is so poor that he does not go into the water to baptise; I also know a pious person, who had embraced the principles of adult baptism by immersion, but being in a poor state of health, was at length baptised in a bath of warm water.—I also know a person who joined a baptist church, but being in a poor state of health, was admitted into the church without baptism, by a vote of the church. Now can we reasonably believe that the Lord Jesus would appoint an ordinance in his church, that would reduce his followers to such shifts as those to obey them; or do we read in the new testament of any such difficulties occurring. There were no places of worship, with baptisteries in them then for immersing the candidates for baptism, as there have been since; yet there seems to have been no difficulty experienced on this account. The 3000 in Jerusalem, Paul in Damascus, Cornelius and his friends in Cesarea, and the jailor and his family in Philippi, all appear to have been baptised immediately, without any previous preparation or any loss of time. Must not the inference be, that the apostles had a more easy and simple method of baptising than immersion. To me it appears beyond doubt that such was the case.

I remain, &c.

LETTER XII.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

HAVING in my last, endeavoured to shew that our Lord did not confine his disciples to immersion, in the administration of baptism, from the difficulties connected with that mode, and also from the improbability, that the apostles did or could practise it, in many of those instances recorded in the New Testament; I now proceed to notice, that the improbability of this is much increased when we reflect upon the import of baptism, or that which it represents. Baptism may be considered in two lights : as a seal and as a sign. As a seal it confirms by a visible token, the promises of God in the covenant of grace ; it declares that whoever receives it, with right dispositions of heart, shall be saved.—As a sign it is significant of spiritual blessings. God might have appointed something as a seal of his covenant, that was not emblematical of spiritual blessings, and it would still have answered the purpose of a seal or token, to confirm the covenant of grace ; but it has pleased him, to appoint an ordinance that not only serves as a seal to confirm his covenant, but represents spiritual blessings. Under the old dispensation circumcision answered this purpose ; under the present dispensation baptism occupies its place. Baptism represents regeneration ; the washing with water, represents our being cleansed from our native pollution, by the spirit and blood of Christ.

That baptism signifies the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, is evident from the following scriptures—“ Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”—“ according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” By one spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one spirit—John 3: 5, Titus 3. 5, 1 Cor. 12. 13. From these scriptures it is evident, that the principal thing

represented by baptismal water, is the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit. But while this is the principal thing represented by baptismal water, it also represents the application of the blood of Christ, to remove our guilt and give us access to God and confidence in him. That baptism represents the application of the blood of Christ, to remove our guilt is evident I think from the following scripture—"Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."—Arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins."—Acts 2. 38, and 22. 16. As it is the blood of Jesus Christ alone, that cleanses from the guilt of sin, there must be a representation of it in baptism, which sacramentally or figuratively washes away sin.

Every attentive reader of the scriptures, must have noticed how frequently blood and water, were used under the law to cleanse from leprosy and from ceremonial defilement, and to qualify the worshippers of God to approach into his presence. They represented the two great branches of our salvation, the pardon of sin and the renewal of our natures in true holiness. In conformity with this, an apostle bears witness that when the side of our great High Priest, was pierced upon the cross, forthwith came thereout *blood and water* ; and that he came not by water only but by water and blood. Baptism represents these two unspeakable blessings united and yet distinguished ; united as the divine and human nature are united in the person of Immanuel, and yet distinguishable as the two natures may be distinguished in him.

It is remarkable, that the influences of the holy spirit are alwas spoken of in the language of prophecy, as being sprinkled or poured out upon the people ; thus, "I will pour out my spirit unto you." "I will pour my spirit on thy seed."—"I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass,"—"so shall he sprinkle many nations."—"I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean." Prov. 1. 23. Is. 44. 3. Joel 2. 28. Prov. 72. 6. Is. 52. 15. Ezech. 32. 25. To these we may add Titus 3. 5, 6—"According to his mercy he saved us, by the wash-

ing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he *shed on us* abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

Now is it not truly surprising, that the application of water in baptism, should represent the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and yet water baptism be administered only by immersion, while the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is always spoken of as *coming down from above*, as being *sprinkled, poured out* and *shed down upon us* abundantly. The same thing may be remarked, as to the application of blood under the law; and blood and water mingled.—“And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the bason.”—Ex. 12. 22. See also Numb. 19. 18, Lev. 14. 7, Heb. 9. In the new testament, also frequent reference is made to those sprinklings under the law. See also 1 Pet. 1. 2, Heb. 12. 24, and 10. 22. From what has been said, I think it appears evident that baptismal water represents the application of the spirit and blood of Christ to the heart, to purify it from sin; and that pouring or sprinkling, represents the thing signified by baptism much better than immersion, and consequently that these are the most proper modes of baptism.

In closing this subject, I would just recapitulate my reasons for relinquishing the opinion, that immersion is essential to baptism.

1. That we have the testimony of the great body of the most learned, candid and pious men in the church of Christ, that the word *baptise* did not invariably signify to *immerse*, as used in the new testament, and by profane authors at that time. This is confirmed by references to the word as used in the new testament, where immersion could not be intended.

2. That it has never been the opinion in any age of the christian church, even where immersion was generally practised, that it was essential to baptism, except among the antipedobaptists for two or three centuries.

3. That baptism by immersion, is attended with so many inconveniences, that it is evidently unsuitable for very cold or very warm and dry countries, and also for persons in a poor state of health.

4. That from the account left on record of baptisms in the new testament, it seems scarcely possible, they could have all been administered by immersion.

5. That sprinkling or pouring, represents the application of the spirit and blood of Christ to the heart, much better than immersion.

From a view of the whole subject, I am fully persuaded, that God has not bound it upon the consciences of his people, to practise immersion as the only scriptural mode of baptism ; and if he has not, who has a right to do it.— As an individual, I believe pouring or sprinkling not only to be valid modes of baptism, but also the most eligible ; and I very much doubt, whether the apostles ever baptised an individual by immersion. But as I cannot prove that they did not, I am therefore perfectly willing that others should be baptised by immersion ; if they think it the best way, and were never baptised by another mode. And I would not say much against any conscientious person's being baptised by immersion who had been baptised in infancy, provided they would allow others equal liberty of conscience, to practise as they thought right ; and would not by making it a term of church communion, scatter fire-brands, arrows and death, among the followers of the Prince of Peace. I have not the least doubt my brethren, but that many of you have been baptised by immersion upon right principles ; you have thought that you were obeying the command and imitating the example of the Lord Jesus ; and it is no wonder, that he should approve of your having it in your heart to build him a house, though you should be mistaken in the manner of performing it.

There are many persons who imagine they are taught by the Holy Spirit, all the peculiarities of their principles and practice ; but it appears to me this is the result of narrowness of mind, and has a tendency to bring the doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit into contempt. That it is the great agent in quickening us from a death of sin to a life of righteousness, and that his divine influences are necessary the whole of our pilgrimage here on earth, to enable us to bring forth the fruits of love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, temperance, meekness and faith, I firmly believe ; but that the Holy Spirit teaches pious per-

sons those things in which they differ from each other I do not believe. You have experienced comfort in being baptised by immersion, you therefore suppose that the Holy Spirit has thus taught you that immersion is the only right mode of baptism; but there are thousands of pious parents who have dedicated their children to God in baptism by sprinkling, with prayers and tears, with strong confidence in the promise of God, that he would be the God of their seed as well as their God. Shall we say that their confidence in God was all mistaken confidence, and that the pious exercises of their minds were all delusive, and that yours were all real: or shall we say that the Holy Spirit taught you, that immersion was the only scriptural mode of baptism, and them that sprinkling was the only scriptural mode.

Conversing not long since with a person whose piety I had no reason to doubt, I was informed that the individual had been convinced by the Holy Spirit, that immersion was the only right mode of baptism, and that all farther argument was in vain. I then related a conversation I once had with a pious person, who believed she had been convinced in the same manner, that pouring was the right way.—This may suffice to show the impropriety of such an opinion, and to satisfy us, that while every real christian is taught of God in the great essentials of the gospel, there are many things of lesser import, in which they may be mistaken.

That the difference in principle and practice which prevails among christians, is a thing to be lamented as a proof of human infirmity is evident, and that it produces to a certain degree pernicious effects is equally evident. But it must be admitted that it always has to a certain degree prevailed, and probably always will while the church remains on earth. There were some christians at Rome in the days of the apostle Paul, who thought it was right only to eat herbs, while others believed that they had a right to eat meat. There was also a difference of opinion among them, as to the propriety of keeping certain days &c.—See Rom. 14. When Paul treated of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, we find him declaring that he was “set for the defence of the gospel,” and that any who

should teach any other gospel was accursed; but we find him dealing very gently with those at Rome, exhorting them to act conscientiously before God, according to the light which they had obtained, reminding them that the kingdom of God consisted not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; and exhorting them to bear with each other, in those things in which they differed. This I think plainly shows us, that there are some things in the gospel of more importance than others; that there are certain doctrines that are essential to its existence, and which if taken away, deprive it of its power to save, and make it in fact *another gospel*; and that for these we should "earnestly contend, as for the faith once delivered to the saints;" and that there are other things of a circumstantial nature, connected with the gospel, such as modes and forms of worship, and the administration of its external ordinances, that are not of that vital importance; but that religion may exist and flourish, among different denominations of christians, while they differ as to those externals.

When the mind of an individual is brought under the influence of religion, that individual is taught to set God continually before him, to regard his authority and to do his will; but the person is not infallibly taught to know the will of God in all things, or those christians at Rome would not have differed in opinion, as to what was the will of God concerning them; this principle will fairly apply to the difference of opinion, that exists as to the mode of baptism. Some pious persons in Nova Scotia and elsewhere, who have perhaps already been baptised by sprinkling, have their minds disturbed as to the validity of the practice, and fear that they are displeasing God, by omitting to be baptised by immersion. But there have been and still are, great numbers of the excellent of the earth, who firmly believe that sprinkling is a more eligible mode of baptism, and that it is equally acceptable in the sight of God, and who never have a scruple of conscience on the subject. They cannot be both infallibly taught of God that they are right; may not those then who would confine the mode of baptism to immersion be mistaken; may their scruples on this subject, not be like the scruples of those at Rome, who fancied it was wrong to eat any thing

but herbs, and proceed only from a want of information on the subject.

As then my brethren, it does not appear to be taught in the word of God, that immersion is essential to baptism ; or that when our Lord commanded to baptise the nations, he intended to confine his people to the practice of immersion : so I do not believe that the Holy Spirit, makes any new revelation on this subject, to individuals or to any denomination of christians. I was I suppose baptised in infancy by sprinkling ; when I came to adult years and had obtained a hope in Christ, I was led to believe that immersion was the only scriptural mode of baptism ; and I trust I embraced the practice from right principles, viz. a desire to do the will of God. But had I had the same information on the subject that I now have, I should not have done so, as I am now fully persuaded, that infant baptism is an ordinance of God, and that sprinkling is a valid mode of baptism ; I am persuaded therefore my brethren, that your attempts to establish immersion, as the only valid mode of administering baptism, is but like building up a Babel, that cannot ultimately stand. It may have its day, it may prevail in certain places for a season ; but it cannot ultimately prevail ; scripture, reason, experience of its difficulties and of its inefficiency to make men wiser or better, will undermine it ; and it will fall to rise no more.—A consummation devoutly to be wished, as while it stands, it cuts you off in a great measure, from your christian brethren of other denominations ; and places you in a hostile attitude to them. It stands at the expence of christian charity, and to the furtherance of needless contention among brethren.

I remain &c.

LETTER XIII.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

It has been said, that a great book is a great evil ; I find mine has grown beyond my intentions. Had I time to spare, I should probably make it less ; but I have not.— It has been written hastily and amidst many interruptions, which I hope will plead its excuse. In it I have assigned my reasons, for relinquishing the principles of adult baptism, and returning to the common faith of the great body of the visible church of God, ever since it was established in the family of Abraham ; viz. that God takes the children of his professing people into a visible covenant relation with himself, and requires his name to be called upon them, and the token or seal of his covenant administered to them. However devious my path has been I have had three objects in view :

1. To justify my conduct in seceding from you my brethren, with whom I have long walked ; and in defence of whose principles I have written and preached.

2. To convince you, that you are in error on the subject of baptism ; and to lead you to just views, of the form and fashion of the house of God in this respect.

3. Should I fail of this, that I might at least induce you to abate a little of that confidence you have, that you alone are right, and that all others are certainly wrong ; and to induce you to attach less importance to your peculiar sentiments on this point, so that though a difference of sentiment should remain on this subject, that it should not interrupt the harmony of the churches of Christ, of neighbourhoods and of families.

A divine of the church of England, Dr. Jostin, pleasantly remarked, that all the difference there was between the church of England and the church of Rome, in point of infallibility, was that while the church of Rome was infallible, the church of England never erred. You do not my brethren, come one whit behind either of them in point of infallibility ; for you are so sure that immersion upon a

personal profession of faith is alone christian baptism, that you refuse to commune at the Lord's table, with any who have not been so baptised. I conceive my brethren, that bigotry is one of the greatest evils prevalent among you. By bigotry I mean an excessive attachment to certain principles or practices, beyond any evidence we have of their truth or importance. It is remarked by Milner, that we shall often find religion connected with bigotry, never with profaneness. I have often had occasion to approve of the truth of the remark ; still bigotry is not religion, but an alloy to it ; and if we can preserve and improve the religion and destroy the bigotry, it will be an important service. I am happy to say my brethren, after a long acquaintance, that there is according to my judgment, a good degree of religion to be found in your churches and families ; and this is so valuable, that we cannot be too thankful to the Father of mercies for it, nor too desirous that it may be preserved and increased ; still as I have already said, there is a great degree of bigotry among you, particularly on the article of baptism : you attach too much importance to your views of it : you are too sure that those views are right : you are too intolerant to those, whose views differ from your's : you are too anxious to impose your principles and practices upon others : you are too apt to impute wrong motives to those who differ from you.

It will perhaps be expected, that I should furnish some proof of this, as it is exceedingly wrong to bring an accusation falsely against any man or body of men. I do not know that I can do this better, than by stating the circumstances, under which I left your body. I have been a number of years a preacher among you ; you no doubt thought, that if I had any religion it was but little. This was also my own opinion, and a subject of lamentation ; you also probably thought that I dwelt too little upon the peculiarities of our own denomination and had too favourable an opinion of others for which I could not condemn myself. Still you charitably hoped, that I possessed some small degree of piety, and was in some way useful ; you treated me with respect and affection, frequently appointing me moderator in your associations, &c. though I possessed neither wealth nor eloquence, nor influence in any other way, than as a minister of the gospel.

A few months since after a long period of enquiry, my

mind decidedly embraced pedobaptist principles ; as soon as this was known, my church determined to call a council from the neighbouring churches, to advise with them as to the steps they were to take. I advised them to do so, not supposing that my brethren would wish to expel me, as they do an incorrigibly bad soldier from a regiment, by drumming him out. I was invited to attend the council, and there found a strong disposition to prove a charge of heresy against me. I had said to some of my brethren in private, that I considered any man who read the bible and professed to believe it to be the word of God, and who assisted in supporting the christian ministry, and who worshipped with a christian congregation, to be a professing christian ; and that he would be judged by God, not as a heathen or an infidel, but as a professor of christianity.— And I had asked, where would be the impropriety of such a man professing christianity, by baptism any more than in the above manner. Hence it was inferred, that I would baptise any person, and administer all the ordinances to him who kept a bible in his house. And a variety of questions were put to me, such as would I baptise an unregenerate person, who professed to believe : would I baptise a person who *assented* to christianity, &c. &c. &c.

All however that it could be made appear I had said, was that I would baptise a person who professed faith in Christ, reserving to myself a judgment as to what was a credible profession of faith. A charge was also brought against me, that I had been writing against the baptists, while I had professed friendship for them; all that this amounted to however was, that I had for a few days previous to its being known, that my sentiments were changed, been committing my thoughts to paper on the subject, perhaps to the amount of two or three sheets. The only charges made good against me, were

1. That I held that the children of professed believers, ought to be baptised.
2. That sprinkling and pouring were valid modes of baptism.
3. That I was willing to commune at the Lord's table, with members of christian churches who had been thus baptised.

Upon these charges it was decided, that I ought to be excluded from all communion with baptist churches : that their places of worship ought to be shut against me ; and that no baptist ought to go to hear me preach. The tendency of this decision was, to excommunicate me from the only regular visible church of Christ on earth, according to their principles. To degrade me from the ministry, to prevent me from preaching or any from hearing me, as far as their influence extended. During the meeting of the council, the person who addressed the throne of the heavenly grace, ventured to assume the office of Him " who searcheth the heart ;" and to intimate that I had been influenced by views of aggrandisement. I was prayed for as a fallen man who had apostatised from the doctrines of the gospel, and as one over whose head, some awful judgment was suspended, I was accused of being a heretic and a factious person ; and was told that if I ever returned, I must acknowledge myself to have been under the influence of a nefarious and diabolical spirit.

Here was zeal brethren : plenty of it ; but where was the humility, the knowledge, the candour, the christian charity, which one would expect from a council, composed of pastors and members of christian churches. I recalled to the memory of my brethren, a circumstance which took place in the United States, some years since ; the pastor of a pedobaptist church had become a baptist. A council was called by the church from sister churches, to advise with them ; the council advised, that the relation subsisting between the pastor and his people, should be dissolved ; but gave the pastor a letter of recommendation to any baptist church, needing a pastor ; as a good minister of Jesus Christ. This instance however of liberality of sentiment, good feeling and christian charity, manifested by a pedobaptist council, when parting with a brother who dissented from them in sentiment, was lost upon my brethren.

Such a degree of bigotry my brethren, is to be deplored by every one, who wishes well to the interests of religion ; it casts a shade upon the character of those who are under its influence ; it has a tendency to open the mouth of the infidel, and to lead him to say, see how those christians love each other : see on what occasions they will excommunicate each other. But it will be asked, why do I

repeat these things ; is it to gratify resentment. Do I wish to injure the brethren, who composed the council ; I trust I do not. I hope they are all good men ; with some of them I have had much friendly intercourse, and still feel for them much esteem and affection ; but I do believe, that such a degree of bigotry prevails on this subject, that it ought to be checked and put down. And to do this, it is necessary that it should be shewn to exist, dragged to light, and then slain and buried deep in the earth, or immersed in the water ; so that it should rise no more.

Permit me my brethren, before I close ; just to recapitulate to you, the arguments which have convinced me that infant baptism is of God.

1. That God, when he constituted a visible church in the family of Abraham, brought children into it with their parents ; and that this state of things continued during that dispensation.

2. That this was intended to promote and perpetuate religion, and thus was a blessing to parents and children.

3. That the new dispensation, does not lessen the privileges either of parents or children.

4. That the Lord Jesus, never intimated in his discourses, that children should not have a place in the church of God under the new testament ; but on the contrary, blessed little children, and said of such is the kingdom of heaven.

5. That he commanded his disciples to go proselyte all nations, baptising them &c. and that his disciples would naturally understand him to mean, that they would be proselyted by families, as they had been under the old testament.

6. That the apostles baptised households.

7. That they never intimated to their hearers, that children were not to be a part of the flock of Christ under the new testament ; but on the contrary, exhibited the promises as being to them and to their children ; and recognised the children of christians as being holy.

8. That they addressed the epistles to the churches, to the children as well as to the parents.

9. That the first christian writer extant, who speaks expressly of baptism, speaks of infant baptism as a common practice ; and that for more than 1000 years, after it continued to be the universal practice of all christians, who practised baptism at all.

10. That when Dr. Buchanon visited the Syrian churches in the east, a few years since, he found them in the practice of infant baptism; though they had never been under the authority of the Pope.

11. That it has always been the opinion of the great body of the christian church in every age, that infant baptism is taught in the bible.

It appears to me, that these arguments furnish such a mass of evidence in its favour, that I cannot see how any candid person can reject it. But admitting that they should not compel your consent to them, they ought at least to induce you to reexamine the subject with care and attention; and should they not produce conviction, they ought to allay censure. I think no candid man, who has considered the arguments in favour of infant baptism, can be much surprised that others should believe in it though he does not.

If then you *think* your pedobaptist brethren in an error, you cannot be quite *sure* of it. Let them have the advantage of your doubts.

The refusal to acknowledge any other christians to be baptised, is at once in my opinion the result of bigotry, and has a tendency to keep it up and increase it. Allow me to shew the many evils that result from it.

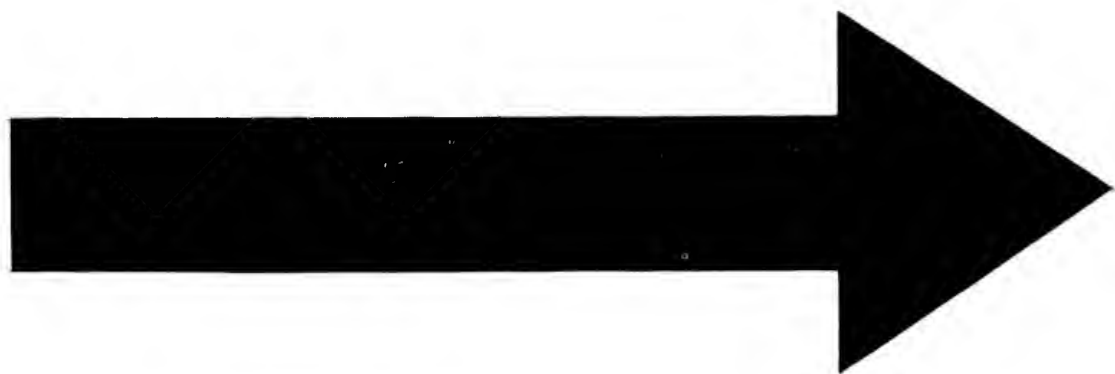
1. It assumes too great a degree of infallibility to yourselves.

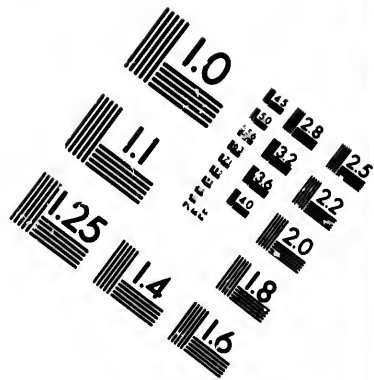
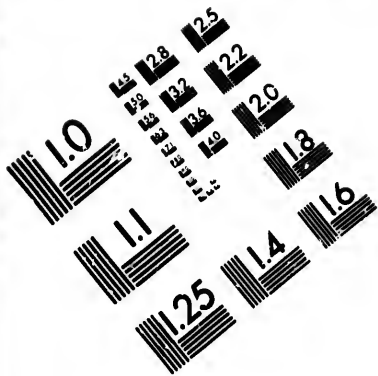
2. It attaches too much importance to the method of administering an external rite. It is a truth much inculcated in scripture, that the kingdom of God consisteth not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The scribe answered our Lord wisely, who said that to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, was more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. The external rites of christianity are few, simple, and easy of performance; and God has not bound his people to that precision in the administration of them, that

was required under the old testament. If we were to contend, that the Lord's supper was to be administered, precisely as it was administered by our Lord, it would lead to endless strife and contention; and why then should we contend so warmly for the mode of baptism. It is not a question in my view, of a whit more importance how was baptism originally administered, than was it leavened or unleavened bread that was used by our Lord, in the institution of the Lord's supper. Had all the time and pains that have been taken to prove that baptism ought to be administered by immersion, been employed in prayer, searching the scriptures on more important subjects, and other endeavours to promote vital and practical religion, how much better would it have been for the church of Christ.

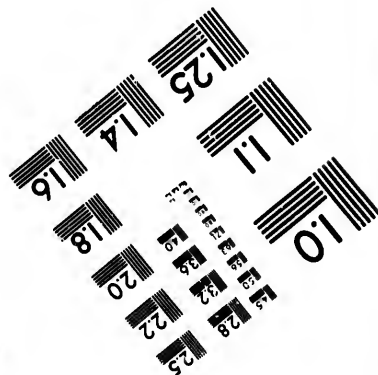
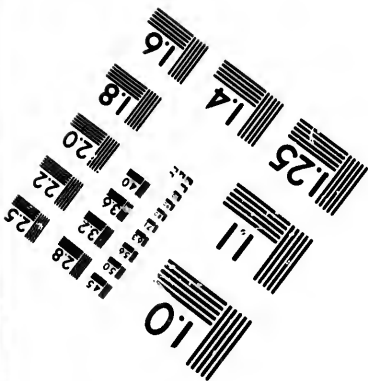
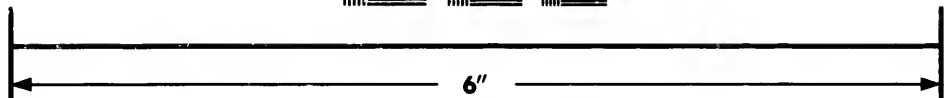
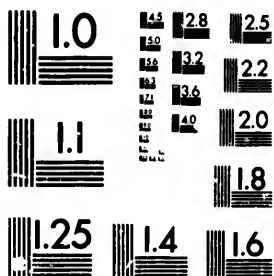
Mr. Judson had the following quotation in his sermon on baptism: "It was a formal and solemn question, made by Magnus to Cyprian, whether they are to be esteemed right christians, who were only sprinkled with water, and not washed or dipped." I foolishly copied this quotation into my former letters on baptism, without reflecting on the sentiment contained. Let us for a moment examine the thing.—Would any man in his sober senses, assert that a man was not a right christian, who possessed "the mind that was in Christ" because he was only sprinkled; would the addition of a little more water make a man a better christian. What is the great intent of christianity? Is it not to reclaim fallen man from his apostacy from God: is it not to enlighten his mind, in the knowledge of God his Maker: is it not to purify him from the love, and practice and condemnation of sin, by the spirit and blood of Christ: is it not to make him holy and happy: is it not to teach him to walk with God on earth, and to be a blessing to those around him: to fit him to glorify God here, and to be glorified with him in body and soul, during the wastless ages of eternity. These are ends worthy of God to propose, ends that the gospel is calculated to answer, ends that justified the mission of the Son of God on earth, and his pouring out his blood upon the cross.

But can we suppose these great ends can be affected, by there being a little more or less water used in baptism. To insist so much then upon the mode of baptism, and to attach so much importance to it, draws the mind off from





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the great things of God's law, and fixes it upon the mode of administering an external rite. It is in my opinion superstitious to a great degree, and tends to lead us to estimate our religion and that of others, not by the strength of our love to God and man, but by the quantity of water applied to us in baptism.

3. It promotes schism in the church of Christ ; it rends his seamless garment.—There is no one practice, that so completely destroys and prevents union. Whatever difference of sentiment prevails among other protestant denominations, there is nothing to hinder their communing together at the Lord's table ; but this, like the ceremonial law between Jew and Gentile, cuts you off from communion with the rest of the mystical body of Christ. Such is the effect of this principle, that it affects the whole conduct. Persons who have been immersed themselves, generally acquire such exclusive principles, that they do not care for associating with their brethren of other denominations in prayer-meetings or in any good work ; and it has been remarked, that where baptist ministers are present in company, they generally address those who have been immersed by the endearing appellation of brother or sister ; while those who have not, are only considered as half-brethren, and are called Mr. or Mrs.—Can that principle be of God my brethren, that leads to such results.

4. It causes your good to be evil spoken of, and hinders your usefulness. There is enough in the gospel to give offence to the carnal mind, without our adding any thing of our own. Now there are many who are prejudiced against the gospel you preach, because it is connected with close communion ; they think your evangelical principles are the result of bigotry, because close communion is. There are persons of piety in remote places also, who would be glad to be visited by your missionaries, were it not that they know it would result in setting up another denomination among them diverse from all others ; and thus further dividing a small community.

Much more might be said with truth, of the evils resulting from the principle of which I speak ; but I forbear. If you all saw my brethren, the alienation of affection and discord, produced by it in families, communities and churches ; your confidence would abate in its propriety.

I would wish before closing, to propose a remedy to you, and should count myself happy, if it might have influence upon you ; and that is to adopt the principle of open communion, to open your churches to pious persons who have not been baptised by immersion.—This would permit every one to follow the dictates of his own conscience, in the article of baptism. The more I think of the principles of close communion, the more I am convinced that they are totally indefensible, on the principles of the gospel ; and that they are productive of much evil. And I cannot think that persons possessing information, liberal sentiments and christian feelings, can long continue to practise them.

The late Robert Hall whose praise is in all the churches, practised upon this principle which I recommend ; and I believe a great part of the English Baptists do at present. Good old John Bunyan practised upon this principle, and I have seen it stated a few years since, that his church still continued to flourish on the same principle, consisting of 800 members ; and maintaining harmony in itself, and with the neighbouring churches. Love is the vital principle of religion: it was love that gave the Saviour to die for sinners ; it was compassion like a God's, that influenced the Saviour in every part of his mediatorial work ; and that still influences him, to bestow blessings upon the fallen family of man. Love is also the brightest of all the train of christian graces, and strengthens all the rest. It is only as far as we are under the influence of this principle, that our conduct is acceptable to God, and profitable to man.—This blessed principle reigns in full perfection in the church above ; what a pity that the church on earth should so little resemble it. The church above is a united church, one song issues forth from all their lips one sentiment is responded by every heart. But what a divided church on earth ; what selfishness, what bigotry, what exclaiming lo, here is Christ and lo, there is Christ.

There is however a brighter day awaiting the church on earth ; I trust a day in which Ephraim shall no more envy Judah, and Judah no more vex Ephraim. This will be brought about we have reason to think, not by the different denominations being all brought over to one, but by more of the spirit of love and of a sound mind being com-

municated to all ; by all being brought to see more clearly, wherein the essence of true religion consists ; and how little that is affected by externals. Selfishness will be more subdued ; the glory of God and good of his cause will be more simply aimed at ; and being thus brought gradually to approximate nearer each other in temper and spirit, as they are more assimilated to the mind which was in Christ ; that happy state of things will take place, when none shall hurt or destroy in God's holy mountain.

How blessed a consummation ! why should we not wish to do our part, to facilitate its approach. I can see but one reason that can be opposed to my proposal, and that is merely one of expediency. It may be said, if you permit persons to come into your churches, without being baptised by immersion, that practice would soon cease ; and its opponent prevail. But why should you be so uneasy on this point, you suppose that the whole scripture is in favour of your practice ; if so my brethren, why should you be so afraid to permit truth to combat error on even ground. The Bible would be in the hands of your church members ; and can you not trust God to support his own cause. Are there any of your members, that have such narrow and scrupulous consciences, as to say I cannot commune with a brother or sister, who has not been immersed. Were Paul on earth again, he would say to such an one, who art thou that judgest another man's servant ; to his own master he standeth or falleth. Let us not therefore judge one another any more, but receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

In closing, I would just say to you my brethren, who are ministers, that you are acting an important part, and you ought to be well informed as to what is duty. If infant baptism be of God, you are opposing his council in opposing it. I would request you seriously to reflect, whether our Lord's commission to his apostles, to baptise adult Jews and heathen, who should profess christianity, authorises you to rebaptise christians, who have professed christianity from their youth : and many of whom have been members of christian churches ; and frequently partook of the Lord's supper. And whether you can find any instance, of persons being baptised in adult years in the

scripture, whose parents were christians. I am persuaded you have not generally sufficiently examined this subject ; I would request you not only to read these letters with candour, but to take pains to get some larger treatise, where the argument can be more satisfactory established ; there can be no harm in examining what can be said on both sides of the question. I would add.—Do not be afraid to follow the convictions of conscience, even should it issue in having your name cast out as evil, by those whom you love. President Edwards observes that it sometimes affords a better test of our faithfulness in adhering to the voice of conscience, to differ from our friends and associates, than to differ from those with whom we have never associated.

To those of you my brethren who are parents, I would ask is there not some danger that in neglecting infant baptism, you are neglecting that which God instituted for the benefit of our children, as well as ourselves. Do you not think it somewhat strange that the gospel has curtailed our privileges, and the privileges of our children ; that while the pious Jew could have his children in the church of God, and the seal of his covenant placed on them, we have no such privilege.

I add no more, I speak as to wise men : judge ye what I say ; and may the Lord give us understanding in all things, I have told you what I conceive to be the truth, plainly, but not with any design to offend or grieve any. Read with candour, and make due allowance for infirmity ; do not seek for something to be offended at, but call in that charity that hopeth all things. I do verily believe infant baptism to be an ordinance of God, and calculated to benefit his cause and people ; but it has been opposed and run down by a great many pious people, under the impression that it is an antichristian ordinance ; and that they have more light, than the church of God has had in past ages. I am persuaded they are mistaken ; and I have felt it my duty to say to them, do thyself and the cause of God no harm. If I have done this intemperately, or in a wrong spirit, forgive and pray for me. If I felt for a moment indignant, at the manner in which I was dismissed from your body, I put it all away ; I remember we are but dust, liable continually to err ; and that we hope for pardon for our innumerable sins, from the mercy of our God

and through the blood of the cross. I therefore conclude by praying, that grace mercy and peace may be upon you, my brethren, upon these letters, and upon your unworthy brother.

WILLIAM ELDER.

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TO PEDOBAPTISTS.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

The above letters though not particularly addressed to you, will probably have been read by many of you. Such as have been accustomed to read longer and better written treatises on the subject, will see that these Letters contain a very brief and imperfect statement, of the arguments in favour of infant baptism. Still it proceeds upon the general principles, it is hoped, upon which better written treatises are founded; and contains sufficient it is thought, to prove the truth of the doctrine. The writer would therefore urge it upon you, as a duty and as a privilege to dedicate your children to God in baptism; and to remember that this is but a part of duty. In offering your children to God in baptism, you profess faith in Christ yourselves.—O see to it, that it is not a mere profession. Baptism will effect nothing for us, or for our children, unless it is accompanied or followed by a real self-dedication of ourselves to God. Let us endeavour to seek first for ourselves and for our children, the kingdom of God and his righteousness; let us endeavour to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: let us pray much that the blessing of God may rest upon the rising generation, that they may indeed be a seed to serve him.”

Then let the children of the saints,
Be dedicate to God;
Pour out thy spirit on them Lord,
And wash them in thy blood.

Thus to the parents and their seed,
Shall thy salvation come;
And num'rous households meet at last,
In one eternal home.

FINIS.

