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By Rev. Dr. Schaff

ART. I.—*The Anglo-American Sabbath.*

1. *The Anglo-American Theory of the Sabbath.*

THE Sabbath, or weekly day of holy rest, is, next to the family, the oldest institution which God established on earth for the benefit of man. It dates from paradise, from the state of innocence and bliss, before the serpent of sin had stung its deadly fangs into our race. The Sabbath, therefore, as well as the family, must have a general significance: it is rooted and grounded in the physical, intellectual, and moral constitution of our nature as it came from the hands of its Creator, and in the necessity of periodical rest for the health and well-being of body and soul. It is to the week what the night is to the day—a season of repose and reanimation. It is, originally, not a law, but an act of benediction—a blessing and a comfort to man.

The Sabbath was solemnly reaffirmed in the Mosaic legislation as a primitive institution, with an express reference to the creation and the rest of God on the seventh day, in completing and blessing his work,\* and at the same time with an additional

\* Prof. Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture*, Vol. II. p. 120, (second edition, 1858,) makes the remark: "It seems as if God, in the appointment of this law, had taken special precautions against the attempts which he foresaw would be made to get free of the institution, and that on this account he laid its foundations deep in the original framework and constitution of nature."

and use with profit, the admission of these learned unbelievers, that the prophet and evangelist did so believe, and have so written.

In this case, if in any one, the maxim is obligatory :

*Fas est ab hoste doceri.*

*By Lyman Atwater D.D.*

ART. V.—*Report on Infant Baptism to the General Association of Connecticut. 1863.*

IT is one healthful and cheering symptom of the present state of Protestant Christianity, that there is a general and growing attention to the church relations of the children of the covenant. In pedo-baptist communions this increasing interest shows itself in the form of earnest and searching discussions and inquiries relative to the neglect of infant baptism, its causes, extent, and remedies; the precise relation to the church of baptized children; the respective duties and privileges of all the parties thereto; and the effect of a due recognition and understanding of these things, both theoretically and practically, in promoting youthful piety, and therein the whole cause and kingdom of Christ in the world. Most of our readers are familiar with the extent and influence of the discussion on these topics in our own church within the few past years. The mind of our ministers and people has been steadily gravitating in one direction—that is, towards the exact ground taken on this subject in our standards. There is a constant struggle to regain what we have lost, and bring back, not only our thinking, but our practice, to the requirements of our Confession of Faith and Directory. This is evinced in the utter refusal of the church to abate one jot or tittle of the stringency of the Book of Discipline, in the premises. She would sooner bear all the evils of the clumsy and awkward judicial proceedings prescribed in the old book, than admit that baptized children are not so strictly members of the church as to be “subject to judicial prosecution.” It is not likely that all who opposed this pro-

posed innovation were equally clear and correct in the detailed reasons of their opposition. But there is no doubt that they were all actuated by one common desire, in no way to loosen, and in every way to strengthen, the bond which links children to the church and its Head. This universal desire in our communion needs no vindication, and is not only most salutary in its present influence, but full of promise for the future.

It is not, however, our own church alone that is exercised on this momentous subject. The agitation is showing itself in greater or less degrees in all the chief Christian communions. Of this, the able and valuable pamphlet before us is one demonstration. It has importance, not simply as the well-considered production of its author, the Rev. Robert G. Vermilye, Professor of Theology in East Windsor Seminary, but as the Report of a Committee to the General Association of Connecticut, and by that body ordered to be printed and circulated with its Minutes.

After showing, by a careful collation of ecclesiastical statistics, the strong probability that, in the Congregational churches of Connecticut, not more than two children out of every five entitled to baptism, actually receive it, he proceeds to inquire into the causes of this portentous fact. These are mainly ignorance or erroneous views, or a lack of appreciation with regard to the meaning of the duties, privileges, and benefits of the ordinance. It is enough to bring any rite into disuse, when it comes to be regarded as meaningless and profitless. Or if, short of this, there be incertitude and confusion of mind about it, or if its practical significance and consequent duties, though not wholly unknown, be substantially ignored or forgotten, the sign will vanish with the thing signified, the seal with the stipulated benefits it ratifies to us.

Dr. Vermilye cogently observes:

“Uncertainty in regard to the position of baptized children in the church, is doubtless one great cause of inattention to the ordinance. If infant baptism be an ordinance of divine appointment, a sign and seal of covenant relations, it confers some privileges, indicates some blessings, and implies some obligations. What are they? If it be an ordinance of the church of Christ, administered by it under its authority and

sanction, it must bring the subject into some relation to that church. What is that relation? It implies some duties, binding on all who are parties to the transaction. What are those duties? We do not stop to answer these questions. But it is not strange that the ordinance should go into decay, if improper views are entertained on these points. If all its meaning and power are exhausted in the moment of its administration,—if there is no difference between children who are baptized and those who are not baptized,—if the minister and the church have no care and provide no nourishment for these lambs of the flock, any more than for others,—if parents themselves look upon their children as having no more relation to the covenant of God and the church of Christ, than children born out of the covenant and never baptized, if this be our theory and practice, we must not be surprised at a growing inattention to this sacrament. The question will arise in many minds, to what purpose is it administered to children? Why bring children to an ordinance in the church, of which the church herself makes nothing, when it is over? If our children are precisely in the same position as others, why baptize them? Other advantages of the ordinance,—the conviction that it is somehow of divine authority, and will somehow be of service, the yearning of heart on the part of the parent to give up the child to God and invoke his blessing upon it,—will doubtless keep the practice alive among many. But many also will be affected by the opposite view. Now what are the facts in the case? We fear there is as much inconsistency and neglect on the part of the church, towards those who are baptized, as there is on the part of parents in presenting their children for baptism. Our children are baptized. How much are they taught as to the peculiar privileges the ordinance implies, and its peculiar obligations? How often are they, in any way, separated from others by a reference to this distinction? How much care do they suppose the church has for them? How often are they appealed to, by their baptismal vows and duties? How much is this made a means of Christian influence and culture in their younger years? What recognition is made of their baptismal relation, at any subsequent period of their Christian, or their natural life? If our baptized children are practically neglected,

as such, by the churches,—if they are as much as others, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel,—strangers and outcasts from the special love and care and watchfulness of the church,—if they have no part nor lot in her,—if their baptism is ignored practically, until they come to make a public profession of their faith,—here is one reason for the decline of the ordinance. An ordinance which means nothing, does nothing, effects nothing,—why it may as well be postponed, until its administration can signify and accomplish something. If the church disregards her own ordinances, why should she wonder that they sink into neglect, or even contempt?"

The following, among several passages that might be selected, shows the writer's sound scriptural insight into this great subject, in its momentous bearings, alike by explicit statements, and suggestive implications.

"And it is worth while to see, how this view of the covenant sweeps over the whole ground included in the doctrine of baptism. Baptism symbolizes the blessings of the covenant; regeneration by the Spirit, and holiness of heart, without which no man can see the Lord. The true view of baptism as a sign and seal of the covenant, takes away all ground for the dogma of baptismal regeneration; while it signifies the true cleansing by the divine Spirit. The covenant puts the parents in the proper position, for while pressing them with the most serious responsibility, it gives them something to lay hold of as a plea, and a ground of encouragement, something to expect, sealed with God's promise. It puts the children in the proper position; within the pale of the covenant, by their descent from godly parents, baptism indicates and seals upon them their duties, furnishes a tender appeal to them to become followers of Christ, and publicly marks their introduction into that visible society in which the covenant is embodied. A proper view of the covenant puts the church in the right position. It imposes upon her some responsibilities for those who are by the divine will admitted to her ranks, and who are, presumptively, heirs of eternal life. Rightly viewed, it would save her from the inconsistency of marking her lambs with the sign of the kingdom of Christ, and then turning them forth amid the wolves of the world. It would make her feel that she, as well as the

parents, has something to do, in training up a generation who will serve the Lord, from their youth upwards."

The necessity for the continued discussion of some sides of this subject is not yet wholly superseded among ourselves. If the *fama clamosa* of the recent rejection by one of our Presbyteries, of a candidate, otherwise giving unexceptionable evidence of piety, because he could not tell the time and circumstances of his conversion, be not wholly unfounded, as we trust it will prove to be, it is the most flagrant among various indications, that the precious truths of Scripture relative to the children of the covenant and early piety, should be set forth in repeated inculcations, and manifold forms, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." We propose to offer a contribution in this behalf, by showing the interest which the children of the covenant have in the Lord, and the tendency of duly recognising that interest to promote the prevalence of pure religion, from the point of view (to which we have seldom seen reference made) in which it is presented in the book of Joshua xxii. 21—25, in the terms following: "Then the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel, The Lord God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, (save us not this day,) that we have built us an altar to turn from following the Lord, or if to offer thereon burnt-offering or meat-offering, or if to offer peace-offering thereon, let the Lord himself require it; and if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel? For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the Lord: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord."

The import and bearing of this will be more evident if we take into view the circumstances and surroundings in which it was uttered. From the context it appears that the two and a half tribes, when separated by the river Jordan, from their brethren of the other nine and a half tribes, built a large altar

to the Lord. It was, of course, natural for their brethren to take for granted that this structure was built for the uses appropriate to it: for the offering of sacrifices to propitiate the favour of God in worship. This would have been setting up a rival altar and worship in competition with those already established on the other side of Jordan, among the more numerous tribes—the only one owned and blessed by the Most High. To set up another and competing worship, unauthorized and unblessed of God, was virtually to introduce heathenism and idolatry into the nation, and expose them to the wrath of Heaven. In this aspect of the case, the other tribes sent a great delegation to their brethren across the river, to expostulate with them against a procedure so heaven-daring and perilous. The latter were not offended at the rebuke and remonstrance. Had their purposes in erecting the altar been what their brethren naturally supposed, they admit that the aversion manifested towards it would have been perfectly justifiable. But they explain that they had no such intent in the measure, as was so very naturally ascribed to them. They call God to witness that they designed to offer neither burnt-offering, peace-offering, nor meat-offering thereon. And in further solemn disavowal of all purpose to do this, or otherwise “turn from the Lord,” they imprecate God’s vengeance upon them, if they in the smallest degree entertained such a design. On the contrary, their object in building the structure was to prevent the apostacy of their children from the true God. How? And according to what principle? They designed to make this a perpetual monument and witness to their posterity, that, although separated from the other tribes by the river Jordan, they were not divided from them as the covenant people of God; but with them were bound to the service, and entitled to the blessings stipulated in the covenant with Abraham their common parent, and for this purpose their federal head and representative. They were afraid that, in the absence of any such monumental token, the children of their brethren having the altar on their own side of Jordan, in future time, would deny the common interest of their own children in the covenant, and their rank among the people of God, and the community of duty and privilege thence resulting. They were consequently

afraid of the effect of this non-recognition of their children's covenant interest and place among God's people, by their brethren across the river, who had the visible institutions and public ordinances of religion exclusively amongst themselves. They apprehended it would lead them to forget and forsake God; to sink into irreligion and apostacy; in their own words, "to cease from fearing the Lord." They appeal to God if they "have not rather done it, for fear of this thing, saying, in time to come, your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel? For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the Lord: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord." This explanation not only satisfied, it "pleased" the deputies sent by the other tribes, and the whole people of Israel. It shows, therefore, that the reasons assigned for the building of the altar, and the principles implied or expressed in those reasons, were conclusive, and of undisputed validity, with all God's ancient people, especially with those most jealous of his honour, glory, and religion. What were these principles? Undeniably these:—To deny or refuse to recognise the "part in the Lord," *i. e.*, the interest in divine promises, privileges, and endowments, which is the peculiar prerogative of the children of the covenant, is to promote irreligion and apostacy: conversely, to recognise this interest, and act conformably to such recognition, tends greatly to promote piety, and prevent fatal lapses in the offspring of the pious.

We have thus brought to view the immense importance to the welfare of religion, of duly apprehending and appreciating the covenant interest of the children of the church, in the Lord; and of their being treated accordingly by their parents, guardians, teachers, and the church, in their training and nurture.

What we now aim to set forth will be comprised under the following heads.

1. What is the peculiar "PART," or interest in God, which his covenant bestows on the seed of his servants.

2. The extent to which it has been denied, forgotten, or ignored; together with the causes and consequences thereof.

3. The practical applications of the subject to the various classes whom it concerns.

1. This part which the children of the covenant have in their covenant-keeping God, is set forth with unmistakable distinctness in the very terms of the original covenant itself. And this all later statements and representations do but confirm, explain, and apply. It is "to be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee." Over and above all that was local and temporary, with regard to their entrance into Canaan, the express stipulation of this "everlasting covenant" was, "And I will be their God." Can there be any mistake about this? Was it anything less than the covenant of grace and salvation in Christ, precisely the same as made to Abraham and his seed? Can God promise more for any, than to be their God? If any doubt could exist as to this interpretation, the New Testament comments of the apostle Paul place it beyond all doubt. Describing to his own countrymen (see Heb. viii. 10) the new covenant, he thus recites the promise of the Lord: "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." So in 2 Cor. vi. 16, he says: "Ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Moreover, circumcision is expressly pronounced "a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith;" and realizes its true meaning and intent, when it is "that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Rom. ii. 29. It is past all doubt, therefore, in view of these, out of countless other testimonies of Scripture, that the covenant which embraces the children of believers with them, is the covenant of grace and salvation through Christ; the same precisely which their parents have embraced.

It is, however, sometimes alleged that this covenant which embraces children with their parents in its ample reach, is confined to the Old Testament dispensation, and that, under the New Testament, children are not included in its scope. No opinion, however, can be more groundless. For, 1. It is not the genius of the New Testament to restrict the blessings of the gospel within narrower limits than the Old. Contrariwise, it

enlarges them as to their fulness and subjects, extending them from the narrow precincts of a single nationality, to every nation and kindred under the whole heaven; and rendering them not more difficult, but more easy of attainment. 2. This constitution which obtained expression in the original covenant of grace with Abraham, is founded not in anything peculiar to any one dispensation, but in the nature of man, and in necessities which are equally urgent under every administration. These necessities are, that parents should represent and act for their children, while as yet they are unable to act for themselves; and, at the same time, train them to act aright when they shall reach the age of discretion or responsibility at which they must act for themselves. This necessity exists in regard to the civil and social *status* of the child. In these respects the parent chooses for himself and the child; his children are identified with him, so far as their age permits, in rank and condition. If the former migrates, and becomes a citizen of any commonwealth, his children thereby enter it, and, without any act of their own, are, according to their years, invested with its privileges and responsibilities. So, if the parent degrade himself to poverty or crime, his children share his degradation, until, in maturer years, they are able to retrieve their position by their own efforts. Now this principle, according to which, in every other sphere, the parent represents and acts for the child during his minority, always making him a partaker of his own privileges, as well as of his disabilities, is it to be excluded from the sphere of religion? Shall it confer on children every other sort of advantage and disadvantage, while it is not allowed to make the child share in the religious privileges of a godly parentage? Shall this be made a channel for conveying everything to children but the blessings of salvation, the redemption of their spiritual and immortal nature, glory, honour, immortality, eternal life? Believe it who will. But it contradicts all scripture and providence. In the very first trial of our race in Eden, our first parents acted for their posterity. This was certainly so with Noah and his descendants, Abraham and his children; with them and their children, and children's children. Indeed, how could religion be preserved and increased among men, unless, by this blessed economy, which includes

children with parents in the church, thus ensuring Christian nurture and training for each successive generation of children, during that plastic period of childhood and youth, when the character usually takes on its impress for time and eternity? Is it not thus, that in the place of the fathers come the children, and is it not through the children thus taking the place of their fathers, that the church is mainly replenished, perpetuated, and enlarged, from generation to generation? Do not the elements that compose our churches show that it is, more than all else, because God fulfils his promise, that he will not take his word out of the mouth of his servants, nor out of the mouth of their seed, nor of their seed's seed, that they thus live, and flourish, and multiply, from generation to generation?

2. The principle is clearly recognised and indubitably asserted in the New Testament. Not only in the implications of these passages, in which Christ bids little children to come unto him, for of such is the kingdom of heaven; and tells us that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God hath perfected praise; but in the explicit announcement to those whom Peter called to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins; "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and unto all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts ii. 39. In the baptism of households, as of the jailer, Lydia, and Stephanas, on the profession of the parent and head; (for it cannot be denied that baptism is a sign and seal of the blessings of salvation, and a badge of the Christian profession, equally with the bloody circumcision it supplanted.) Preëminently is all this affirmed in 1 Corinthians vii. 14, when the apostle declares, "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." Doubtless *holy* here means set apart for God, as included in the covenant which we have been considering. Less than this it cannot mean. It means a state or relation sacred to God, conveyed by covenant through pious parentage; and that it is conveyed in such a liberal measure, as to be transmitted upon the faith of one of the parents, and not stopped in its transmission by the unbelief of the other,—who, so

far as is requisite to such transmission, is sanctified by his connection with a believing partner. That this oneness of parents and children in the covenant of grace enters into the constitution of the Christian church is therefore undeniable.

How much then precisely does it mean or involve?

1. It does not mean that all and singular the children of pious parents, arc or ever become real children of God by regeneration, and, on coming to moral agency, by faith and repentance unto life. It does not mean that all of them really have God for their God, or are finally saved. We know that the contrary is true of vast numbers. They live and die without hope and without God in the world, strangers to that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

2. Equally distant is it from the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which, in the mildest possible explanation of it, means that regeneration is bestowed upon all recipients of baptism at the hands of a duly authorized minister, at the time of its administration. The protestant and scriptural doctrine is, that baptism is not tied to the benefits it signifies and seals, either as to subjects or time. Circumcision, in whose place it comes, is, in the case of Abraham, expressly declared to be a sign and seal of the righteousness of that "faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised." Rom. iv. 11. On the other hand, to the breaker of the law, circumcision becomes uncircumcision, to him who keeps it, uncircumcision becomes circumcision. Rom. ii. 25, 26. Not only so, but the condition required for baptism, as shown in the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, was faith. The Christian converts believed and were baptized. When baptism was sought, the answer was, "if thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." Acts viii. 37. Faith, then, with all the gifts of grace to which it is linked, was, in the case of adults, a condition precedent to baptism, which, therefore, though it signifies and seals these blessings, is not infallibly linked to them. Moreover, in respect to the baptized, even still more emphatically than in the case of the children of the pious, the argument from fact for ever annihilates the theory in question. Vast numbers of the baptized are, in fact they live and die, irreligious and unbelieving; therefore unregenerate;

therefore, there is no truth in the theory of baptismal regeneration.

3. It is to be further noted, that this covenant has three parties, viz., God, the parents, and the child. As in all other compacts, the failure on the part of the promisee to fulfil his part of the contract, releases the obligation of the promiser to fulfil his part. Now this promise to be a God to the believing parent and his seed, supposes that such parent thus accepts God as not only his own, but his children's God; that acting for the child, he makes a profession, and, if opportunity presents, a formal sacramental recognition of such acceptance in the baptismal dedication of the child to God; that conformably to this, he will bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and teach and train him to live as one who is the Lord's; whom the Lord visibly recognises as one who is to be regarded and treated as such, by setting his seal upon him. Where this condition is duly complied with by the parent, is his faith often tried by seeing his child die in his sins, however wayward he may be for a time?

But the child is also a party to this covenant. On reaching the age of responsible action, he too may break the covenant. He may abjure the grace it stipulates, and refuse to receive and acknowledge God as his God; Christ as his Saviour; the Holy Spirit as his Sanctifier. This, however, we do not believe would be a frequent result, did parents fully apprehend the intent and fulness of the covenant, and, with due fidelity and wisdom, train up their children in conformity to its spirit and scope. If they fully realized that "part in the Lord," which the covenant gives, and brought their children to the due consciousness of it, and taught them to think, and feel, and act in accordance therewith, would their children so often be "kept from fearing the Lord?" The promise, "train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it," assures us of the contrary. Yet not so, that it is proved false, if some children even then prove recreant to their covenant privileges, and disown the God of their fathers thus tenderly seeking to be their God. For it is not meant that all and each of those trained aright will never

go astray; but it is meant to declare, as in other general maxims in the book of Proverbs, the ordinary tendency and effect of such training: just as when it is said that the "borrower is servant to the lender;" "a soft answer turneth away wrath;" "the hand of the diligent maketh rich." While these maxims are true as representing a general law or tendency, they are not falsified by more or less exceptions. It will not do to say that every poor man is a sluggard, because "the hand of the diligent maketh rich;" that every man who has failed to turn away wrath, has answered with hard and irritating epithets; or that every Christian who is agonized with recreant children, has been of course specially delinquent in his teaching and discipline.

In stating what this covenant does not mean, we have made a partial suggestion of what it does mean. It means that the children of believers, by virtue of the divine covenant made with them through their parents, and accepted in their behalf by their parents, are to be regarded and dealt with as presumptively one with their parents in their relation to God, his kingdom and salvation; as having in their parents professed Christ, and by baptism put on the seal and badge of such profession; as being, according to their capacities, and in a manner suitable to their years, entitled to all the privileges, and bound to all the duties of Christians, of those to whom God is their God; who, being baptized into Christ, have so far forth presumptively and in appearance put on Christ; and, therefore, are expected to walk, after the manner of childhood, as befits the children of God and followers of Christ. They are to be reckoned and dealt with as those who are visibly of the community of God's people, members of the visible church. Their position is to be reckoned that of those who make God what he covenants to be, their God, until the contrary shall be made to appear by their deliberate rejection of him, or their contamination with heresies and scandals, tantamount to a rejection of him, on their reaching those years of discretion, when it is put upon their personal responsibility to accept or reject God in Christ, to ratify or repudiate the professions and vows made in their behalf by their parents in their infancy, while as yet they were incapable of acting for themselves. In short, they are,

in a manner which comports with their years, members of the visible church of Christ's visible people, invested with all the privileges and subject to the duties of that position, until they disown their birthright—thus making themselves aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. Such we understand to be their "part in the Lord."

Now the blessed peculiarity of this part is, that it befits the very position in which they are placed, that they should lead a Christian life, according to their years; that they should be taught and trained accordingly; that it alone consists with the place God has assigned them, that they should think, and feel, and live, and act as becomes the children of God. To this view the whole teaching and training of them should be conformed. They should be taught and trained to act aright towards God, man, and themselves, because such conduct alone becomes Christians, the followers of Christ, and the children of God. They should be taught to avoid wrong, not only for other good and sufficient reasons, but because it is unchristian, inconsistent with fealty to God and Christ, whose they are by covenant, whom they are bound to serve, and whose favour is theirs, if they do not repel it by apostacy from their high position, exalted as it is to heaven in point of privilege, and set in heavenly places in Christ. The right to this sort of training for God, Christ, and heaven, is included in the "part" which the children of the covenant have in the Lord.

And contrasted with the want or privation of it, it is an element of prodigious power in the promotion of youthful piety. According to the mode of thinking and acting towards covenant children which has very widely supplanted this, they are not warranted in ranking themselves, parents are not warranted in ranking them, among the visible people of God, or as entitled to assume the attitude, claim the privileges, cherish the feelings, the sympathies, and hopes, or held to the duties of the children of God; they are rather outsiders and aliens to the church; they take their places with heathens and publicans; they are to cast their lot and their associations with the world of the irreligious and wicked. However faithfully they may be taught the principles of Christianity, so far as their life

is concerned, they are really expected "to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, to stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seat of the scornful," until they can give some account of a conscious change which is requisite to reclaim them from these worldly and wicked associations to the fold of Christ in which they were born. This is what is conceived to belong to the proprieties of their position. And how difficult it is to reclaim them, when once they have formed, and long been inured to these perilous associations, many tearful parents, and all ministers who watch for souls, know too well! And how many are lost beyond recovery on these dark mountains, we know, alas! too well. And of those so reclaimed we know how much less symmetrical, thriving, and consistent Christians they often are, than those whose habits of heart, soul, and body, from infancy or earliest childhood, have been moulded by Christian associations; by a conscious union and sympathy with the people of God; by the practical exemplification in heart and life, according to the measure of their age and of the gift of God, of the great principles of Christian doctrine and practice.

But, it may be asked, can any one be saved, or have true Christian feeling and practice without the new birth? And shall he assume to have them before he has them? If we could not answer these questions without running into some logical labyrinth which we could not see through, this is no reason for neutralizing the covenant of God, and despoiling it of its gracious power. But there is no real difficulty here. Of course there can be no spiritual life without the regeneration and indwelling of the Spirit. But this fundamental truth of Scripture and Christian life is perfectly consistent with the principles already advanced. It is a cardinal doctrine, that the work of the Spirit is known to the subject of it, and to other men, only by its effects; its fruits of faith, repentance, love, and holy obedience. But as to the time or manner of that inworking of the Spirit which generates this new life, this is not in itself, but only in its effects, a matter of consciousness—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and none can tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; even so is every one born of the Spirit." John iii. 8. Suppose such a recognition and training of the children of the covenant as is here indicated; should we

not expect the Spirit, by his renewing and sanctifying energy often silently to intermingle with and vitalize this Christian nurture; so that, as in the case of personal professors of religion in maturer years, when taught to think and feel, and act and live, as becomes the children of God, they would be enabled and disposed by his almighty grace so to think, feel, live, and act? And will not this, in a multitude of cases, so occur, as pastors constantly find it occurring, that no particular time is remembered when the subject first began to be conscious of such experience, or that the subject of it is unable to give any historic account of his change? "So is the kingdom of God," says our Saviour, "as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day; and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Mark iv. 26—28. It is a great mistake to suppose the genuineness of religious experience depends on our being able to give an account of the time of its origin. The great question is, what is our present experience? What are our present feelings and views? Are they scriptural and evangelical? If so, that is enough. And they are none the worse, if the Spirit, having been vouchsafed at or before our earliest consciousness, does not permit the memory to go back to any period when they did not exist, at least in some rudimentary form. All that is needful is, not that we should be able to tell how and when vision first opened, but "whereas I was blind, now I see." Are we not told in Scripture of Johns, Samuels, Timothys, sanctified from the womb, from childhood knowing the Holy Scriptures? of children learning to fear the Lord? Some of the most exemplary Christians we have ever known, have assured us they did not remember the time when they did not fear God, and try to follow Christ. It is clearly not our commission to limit the Holy One of Israel in the administration of that Spirit which "divideth to each one severally as he will."

It is to be observed withal, that the Scriptures recognise no other education of the children of the covenant than such as accords with the principles we have advanced. They not only direct us to *teach* them how they should go hereafter, *after*

some perceptible excitement has stirred them, but to *train* them in the way in which they should go; *i. e.*, to form the habit of walking in it. Was not the like education of his household by Abraham an indispensable condition of the fulfilment of the covenant on the part of God? For, says the Most High, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Gen. xviii. 19. The realization of the blessings of the covenant, therefore, is suspended on their children being enjoined, instructed, and trained to "keep the way of the Lord."

The same thing is the clear teaching of the New Testament, as is shown not merely from our Saviour's tender welcome of little children to himself, "since of such is the kingdom of heaven;" from the apostles in their first proclamation of the gospel, declaring to the children of the covenant which God made with the fathers in Abraham, that God sent his Son Jesus to them FIRST, "to bless them in turning away every one of them from their iniquities," (Acts iii. 25, 26;) not merely from the baptism of households in the profession of their respective heads; or the accounts given of devout men fearing God, with all their houses, and of churches in households; from the designation of the children of believers as "holy," which means nothing less surely, than that they are so among the people of God, that they are recreant to their position and privileges if they live unholy. Not only is the great truth we are considering, proved by inference from these and like portions of the New Testament, but it is directly and unambiguously taught in the practical exhortations of the Pauline Epistles. Not only is the charge solemnly laid on parents to "provoke not their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," (Eph. vi. 4;) which means not merely to instruct them in the truths and duties of Christianity, but to strive to mould them to habits of obedience to the divine command. But children are charged to obey their parents in the Lord. "In the Lord" observe, *i. e.*, not on any merely natural principles, but as in believing obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, to what sort of persons

is the epistle in which this occurs addressed? Surely to the "saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." So that to the Colossians, in which similar language occurs, is addressed to "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse." Now among the particular classes into which the apostle distributes these, for purposes of special admonition suited to their respective conditions, such as husbands, wives, servants, masters, parents, is children; children in their minority; children whose prime duty is to "obey their parents in the Lord." And what does this imply? That all and each of these children are actual Christians, really regenerate? By no manner of means; any more than addressing the whole as "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus," implies that each and every parent, servant, and master, who was by profession, visibly a member of those or any other churches, is really regenerate. He is constantly indicating that among the churches so addressed there are those who in words profess Christ, and in works deny him. But this much is clearly implied in respect to all alike, that obedience to the Lord, in an exemplary walk and conversation, is that which alone befits their position, as professing, in themselves or through their parents, the religion of Christ; that this is what is to be looked for as presumptively true of them, until they dispel this presumption, and forfeit their high privileges by the express rejection of them, or by heresies and scandals equivalent thereto; *i. e.*, by apostacy.

The doctrine thus clearly deduced from Scripture, has been the doctrine of Christendom, with insignificant exceptions—leaving out of view those ritualists who take the still higher and unwarrantable ground of baptismal regeneration. It is expressly incorporated in the symbols of all the Reformed churches, and in the practice of some of them is pressed to a dangerous ultraism, while a few, including many of our American churches, in recoiling from the extreme which made this precious truth a cover of formalism, have swung to the opposite and no less perilous extreme; and have wholly or partially lost sight of the covenant privileges and obligations of our children, whereby they, the church, and religion, have suffered inestimable loss. But, whatever may have been our degeneracy

in practice, there is no doubt that the Presbyterian standards fully and emphatically assert the principles we have advanced. They declare that "the visible church, which is catholic and universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation as before under the law,) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." This does not mean that all that profess the true religion, or their children, actually possess it; or that even pious children should come to the Lord's table till they are old enough to discern the Lord's body; but it means that they are to be regarded and treated as those who, under such appropriate Christian regimen as befits their position, may reasonably be expected to exemplify these professions, and live and act as becomes the members of the family of God, till they manifest the contrary. That this is its practical meaning and intent, as to the appropriate recognition, training, and church relation of the children of the covenant, is put beyond all doubt by the explicit practical interpretation given in the Directory for Public Worship, in the following words:

"Children born within the pale of the visible church and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the church; and are to be taught to read, and repeat the Catechism, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And, when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper."

There can be no doubt that these symbols assume all in regard to the children of the church which has been claimed in this article. They afterwards speak of covenant children as "young Christians." But this is not intended to encourage any but real believers to come to the Lord's supper. Elsewhere the minister is instructed to "warn the ignorant, profane, scandalous, and those who secretly indulge in known sins, not to approach the holy table; while those sensible of

their lost and helpless estate, depending on the atonement of Christ for pardon and acceptance with God, who desire to renounce their sins, and are determined to lead a holy and godly life, are to be invited to it. See *Directory for Worship*, viii. 4.

Whether children or mature professors be concerned, all are not Israel that are of Israel. The attempt to exclude from the visible church all but the actually regenerate, must inevitably prove a failure. The attempt to extirpate *all* tares will inevitably extirpate the wheat. No stringency in terms of admission to the Lord's table can exclude all unworthy partakers. Not all who in the judgment of charity, for purposes of human treatment, must be recognised as members of the church visible, are therefore members of the church invisible; although their position in the visible church is upon the presumption that they are and will prove those chosen of God, who constitute the church invisible, unless they dispel it by acts and professions contradictory thereto. "He is not a Jew that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew that 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. ii. 28, 29.

The truth thus developed is of immense importance and interest to the church, her ministers, and office-bearers. Let them not put the lambs of Christ out of that fold in which he, in the amplitude of his love and grace, has placed them for due nourishment, protection, and growth. Let them cherish, and feed, and guard them by all the appliances of Christian instruction, discipline, and watchfulness; and by abundant prayer, for the Holy Spirit to be shed upon them, for the service of Him who claims them as His own, that so they may be prepared for the full duties and privileges of mature Christians, when they reach the years of discretion; and for the ratification of the vows, and the assumption of the professions made for them in baptism, by their parents in infancy, by a believing approach to the Lord's table, and paying their vows to God in the presence of all his people, on reaching a suitable age. Let parents and children be duly instructed in their duties and privileges in the premises, and can there be a doubt that the church would be

rapidly replenished, not by mere external aggregation, but by development from within; by the multiplication of those vigorous and accomplished Christians who, sanctified from the womb or from childhood, have been trained to a holy facility and aptitude in the service of God; who, being planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God, and shall be still praising him, both on earth, and when transplanted to the heavenly paradise.

While this exalts the privileges of the children of the covenant, it in no manner detracts from, it rather augments the privileges of those that are without. The promise is to them also, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. To these also the gospel sounds in tones of sweetest music: "Ho, every one that thirsteth; come ye to the waters; come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price!" "And him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." The more of the children of the covenant that flock to Christ, as clouds and as doves to their windows, the stronger are the heavenward currents that environ all others, and set them towards Christ and salvation; and the greater will be the number of converts from among them. In the most remarkable outpourings of God's Spirit which we have known, the power was felt at first, and chiefly among the children of the covenant, who had been religiously trained, but it soon extended itself from them to others, until infidels even came to seek the Lord.

Parents should be persuaded to enter into the full meaning of the covenant, claim its privileges, and train their offspring according to its meaning and intent—as belonging to the Lord; those to whom he has promised to be a God. Let them bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that they may feel that they are recreant to their position and privileges, if they do not abhor sin, fear God, and obey Christ; and even before reaching their majority, come to the Lord's table as humble believers upon, and penitent followers of Him.

And shall the children of the covenant, the covenant of the Most High to be their God, repel him when he thus comes to them? Will they spurn their heavenly birthright for the beggarly elements of this world! Will they sink from their high position as members of the church of Christ to the

place of worldlings, the seat of scorers, and the doom of unbelievers? With the seal of God upon their brow, will they go from the commonwealth of Israel to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; from the home of piety, the nurture of the Lord, the baptismal font, the communion table, spread to welcome their approach, and feed them with the bread of heaven, to the realms of outer darkness, the blackness of darkness for ever? God forbid. Do any say that they are too young to exercise faith? Oh dreadful mistake, often made by parents and children! The first step on the part of adults, even the most learned philosophers, is to become as little children; otherwise they cannot exercise saving faith, or enter the kingdom of heaven. He who has any higher than childlike wisdom in practical religion, must forthwith unlearn it, if he would be a disciple of Christ.

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By Rev. S. M. C. Anderson.

ART. VI.—*Miracles.*

THIS is a subject of great importance, because miracles lie at the foundation of a religion which quickens the hopes and directs the energies of the best men among the most powerful nations of the earth. Are they a reality, and is faith in them an intelligent exercise of the understanding? Or would it remove a blot from our rational nature, and add strength and purity to our moral character, if they were banished to the lumber-rooms of superstition? To accomplish this result, infidelity has long been straining all the resources of reason and ridicule. Let us see whether these efforts are worthy of success.

The idea of a miracle cannot be determined either by the signification or usage of the word. Any event out of the common order of things, and suited to excite wonder, is called a miracle in Scripture. The only method of fixing the meaning of the term definitely, is ascertaining the characteristics of that class of events which it is intended to discriminate as miracu-