

V
A SERIES
OF
LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO THE REV. ADAM FREEMAN, A MEMBER
OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH,

BY,

THE REVEREND STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE PREBYTERIAN CONGREGATION,
GEORGE-TOWN.

THESE LETTERS CONTAIN TWO PARTS:

- I. A Vindication of the Right of Infants to the Sacrament of Baptism, according to Scripture.
- II. Some Animadversions on a Pamphlet lately published by Mr. Adam Freeman, entitled, "Infant Baptism deceased, or, Seven Mountains over against Seven Mountains."

ROMANS, xi, 16.

For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the Root be holy, so are the Branches.

EPHESIANS, iv, 14

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

GEORGE-TOWN,

TERRITORY OF COLUMBIA:

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PREFACE, TO THE READER.

THE Reverend Adam Freeman was trained up in the Presbyterian Profession; received his education at Liberty-Hall Academy, studied Divinity under the Rev. Mr. Graham, and was licensed to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, by the Presbytery of Lexington, in Virginia. He travelled, as a Missionary, under the direction of the Synod of that State for some time: at length, he was invited, by the united congregations of Captain John, Difficult, and Seneca, to take the pastoral care of their souls. He accepted their call, and was, soon afterwards, ordained and set apart for their service, by the Presbytery of Baltimore. Mr. Freeman's discipline was much more strict, than that, to which the same people had been accustomed, under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Hunt, their former, worthy pastor. He would baptise no children whose parents and guardians were not of good standing in the church, and in her communion. The people were alarmed and many of them were highly offended: such, generally withdrew their subscriptions which were intended for Mr. Freeman's temporal support. In the mean time some accusations were laid in against the conduct of several who were in the full communion of these churches, some of them, it appears, were proved to be guilty, and refusing subjection to the judgment of session, they were publicly excommunicated. The distress of the truly pious among them became great, and the passions of those, who were supporters of the ministry, but not in the full communion of the church, became more and more inflamed. Mr. Freeman, about this time, thought it his duty to hold a conversation with every communicant, upon experimental religion, and if they were unable to give a rational, and scriptural account of the work of grace, in their hearts, he straightly prohibited them from partaking of the Lord's Supper in future;

future; or at least, until he and they had good grounds to believe that they were in a state of grace. His next step was to refuse the administration of Baptism to children altogether. Let the character of their parents and guardians be good or bad, he would not initiate any of them into the visible church by baptism. This determination soon afterwards brought him to a public declaration, that he was in principle, a Baptist, and not long after he renounced his Infant Baptism, by being immersed in a Mill-pond, in Anne Arundel county.

We all expected Mr. Freeman would publish something in vindication of his conduct. This publication is now before me under the title of "Infant Baptism decessed, or, seven Mountains over against seven Mountains, in seven letters addressed to a pious pædo-baptist friend."

All these things, which I have mentioned, taken in the aggregate, have urged me to come forward with the following vindication of the Right of Infants to the sacrament of Baptism, according to Scripture, and with some Animadversions upon Mr. Freeman's performance. I have chosen to address my letters to Mr. Freeman himself, because it will afford an opportunity of coming near to him and of speaking to his heart.

I am conscious, thousands of my brethren in the ministry, are much more capable of examining this subject, than myself; but I have heard of none who intended to undertake it, and as I was a near neighbour to Mr. Freeman, and was brought acquainted with a number of binding circumstances which were unknown to the other members of the Presbytery of Baltimore, I felt the obligation and have acted in obedience to it.

That the following series of letters may be found instructive and serviceable to the public in general, is the fervent wish of their servant, in the Gospel of Christ.

STEPHEN L. BALCH.

July 15, 1801.



LETTER I.



REVEREND SIR,

NOTHING, short of a deep sense of duty, could have prevailed with me to engage in a polemical dispute of any kind. But I consider myself as “set for the defence of the gospel” and its ordinances, and as you have, of late, done all you could do, to destroy the Right of Infants to the Sacrament of Baptism, which I can prove to be an ordinance of the gospel and an institution of Jesus Christ, the great and only head of his church, I have concluded, to meet your arguments, to supersede, or set them aside, by the authority of the word of God, even, though the accomplishment of the task may break in upon the time allotted for official duties, and may bear hard upon my system, already impaired by laborious services. “I will spend and be spent for the gospel; and whatever belongs to it,” should be the standing motto of every faithful minister of Christ.

I owe much to the professors of christianity in general, I owe more to the particular denomination to which I belong; still more, to the injured flock over
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which you lately presided, and which you have left without a shepherd ; I am greatly indebted to the people committed to my charge, whom it is my duty to instruct and to keep in the right way ; but, I owe abundantly more than all, to Jesus Christ, who has established a church in the world, and favoured it with ordinances of his own appointment. When, therefore, the christian church, in general, is alarmed ; when the Presbyterian church, in particular, feels an injury and has been wounded, by you, her late friend and supporter, when the several members of your former congregations together with my own hearers, all unite, and with loud and anxious voice call on me to show my opinion ; above all, when I firmly believe, that Jesus Christ, who instituted the Sacrament of Baptism, calls, as from heaven, upon me by his revealed will, to vindicate the right of infants to that ordinance, I cannot ; I will not, I dare not be silent.

The circumstances just now mentioned, sir, seem to shew the weight and importance of the controversy subsisting between us. It is also of great importance in another point of view. For it intimately concerns all churches who hold the right of infants to baptism. I would not have you, however, when you read this, conclude, that I hold baptism to be essential to salvation. Far, very far be that from me. But yet I, unequivocally, believe, it is not a matter of trifling indifference, or of little, or no consequence whether persons are baptized or not. If infant baptism is not a divine institution and therefore, warranted and defended by the word of God, then all christian societies, the Baptist society, and others, if there are others, who deny infant baptism, excepted, must be in a lamentable situation indeed.

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They have no regular gospel ordinances among them, of any kind. If infant baptism is a mere nothing, as Baptists pretend to think and say, then all who call themselves christians, who make use of it, and who hold its propriety and expediency, are, in fact, a company of unbaptized heathens. They have neither churches, ministers, nor ordinances according to the appointment of Jesus Christ. This, sir, is the evident conclusion of your new-chosen church, otherwise you would certainly allow, such as you think pious of other denominations to communicate with you in the sacrament of the Lord's supper. The ministers themselves, of other churches, according to you, being destitute of scriptural baptism, have no right to administer that ordinance to others, and they, together with their flocks being unbaptized, the former have no right to dispense the sacrament of the supper, nor have the latter any right to commemorate the dying love of their redeemer, in an ordinance of his own institution. Having, therefore, no regular ordinances among them, they are all destitute, of regular gospel churches and in this respect they are in a state, second to heathenism itself.

You yourself, sir, was solemnly ordained and set apart, by the imposition of hands and by prayer, to the great work of the gospel ministry. The members of the Presbytery of Baltimore were the visible agents in this business. They were all baptized in their infancy, and none of them, I believe have, as yet, renounced and set aside the validity of their baptism, by being immersed at nature age, as you have done. You hold your sacred office then, sir, by a very unjustifiable tenure. You hold your present standing in the christian church,

as a minister of the gospel, from men who are not christians, at least, from men, who openly, willingly, and publicly neglect a most solemn ordinance and institution of Jesus Christ.

Do you now, sir, begin to awake from your profound sleep? Do you ask "what have I done?" "To what extravagant lengths has my zeal for the purity of the christian church carried me?" "Must I not be again ordained, that I may be a Baptist in every sense of the word?" "No, a repetition of that is I believe unnecessary; but I will take counsel and act accordingly." If the preceding observations have prevailed, to set you on these exercises, I greatly rejoice. Prepare yourself, my dear sir, for being yourself a witness of the absolute ruin of that "*castle in the air*" which you have endeavoured to erect to the destruction of infant, and to the establishment of adult baptism *only*.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH.

LETTER II.

REVEREND SIR,

THE preceding letter was chiefly intended to prepare the way for those which follow. I thought it proper to point out both to you and others, the weight and importance of the controversy which hath heretofore, and which does now subsist between other christian denominations in general, and the baptist denominations. When men of every church see,
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and even feel, that the matter in dispute is highly interesting and intimately concerns them all, each for himself, will be more apt to give his attention, and instead of complaining that polemical disputes answer no other end, than to hold up to public notice, the combatants, he will conclude that truth is concerned, and that it is the duty of all to know the truth, as it is in Jesus.

I believe, sir, you are perfectly satisfied, that I have avoided, at all times, as much as was consistent with my station, all contentions with all sects of christians, who differed from myself in principle and in practice. My pulpit has never been the beacon whence malice and uncharitableness, bitter invectives, and anathemas have been discharged against any, who call themselves by the name of Christ. Granting all this, however, I count it my incumbent duty, to turn aside the blow, which you have been aiming, with vengeance, for some time past, against the Presbyterian, as well as other churches, because they hold, contrary to your sentiments, that infant baptism is an ordinance of the gospel and instituted and even virtually commanded by Jesus Christ. This blow mighty in your esteem, but weakness itself, in my judgment, has lately been prepared in and dealt forth from the press of Warner and Hanna, under your guidance and direction. What influence it may have upon the ignorant and unstable, I am not able to determine, exactly; this I know, that as to myself, I felt its weight no more than a marble wall would feel the stroke of a straw, in the hand of an infant. Lest, however, weak minds should be caught in this net of fraud, I take up the subject and enter the field as a combatant. The example and
practice

practice of Christ and his Apostles, justifies me. The one and the other of them disputed with the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and Rabbins, among the Jews, when the doctrines of the gospel and the ordinances of the new testament church were called in question. To imitate them, when there is a necessity, is my wish, nay, it is my high ambition.

Let me now draw near to the subject, and endeavour to shew you and through you, to shew others, the scripture ground on which the right of infants to baptism, certainly, rests.

This ground is the covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed ; the institution of circumcision as a sign, or seal of that covenant, and the administration of that sign or seal by God's appointment, to Abraham's infant offspring : Whence, this conclusion is just and natural, that the infant children of covenanted parents, had by God's appointment a right to the outward sign or seal of the covenant under the law, and therefore as the same covenant continues, they have, doubtless, the same right under the gospel. I say the infant children of covenanted parents, that is such parents as are baptized and make a visible profession of religion. Now to bring out the above conclusion, I shall endeavour to prove these three things :

1. That the covenant which God made with Abraham was a covenant of grace, and substantially the same with that which is now in force under the gospel.

2. That circumcision was the outward sign, token or seal of this covenant, and was by God's appointment administered to infants.

3. That baptism is now a sign or seal of the same covenant, instituted in the room of circumcision, and therefore,

therefore, ought to be administered to the same subjects, viz. to the infant children of covenanted parents.

1. The covenant which God made with Abraham was a covenant of grace, and substantially the same with that which is now in force under the gospel. This I take to be the great turning point, on which the final result of the controversy very much depends: for if the covenant which God made with Abraham, which included his infant offspring and gave them a right to circumcision was not a covenant of grace; then I candidly confess, that the most substantial pillar, on which the right of infants descended from covenanted parents, to baptism, seems to rest, is taken away, and consequently the strongest arguments in support of the doctrine are much weakened, if not entirely overturned. But on the other hand, if this covenant which included Abraham's children and gave them a right to circumcision, was the same covenant of grace under which the spiritual seed of Abraham now are, then I think the covenant relation of believers' children, and consequently, their right to the sign or seal of the covenant, under the gospel as well as under the law, is indisputable.

Now that the covenant made with Abraham was the same covenant of Grace which subsists, at present, under the gospel is evident from the following arguments.

1. The nature of the covenant and the tenor of the promise it contains, are the very same with the covenant of grace, Gen. xvii, 7. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. This first, is the constant title of the covenant of grace, I will be a
God

God to them and they shall be to me a people, God never was, nor will he ever be a God to any man (since the fall) but through Christ and by a covenant of grace. Hence the Apostle mentions this as the express tenor of the covenant of grace, and the great sum of all the promises it contains, Heb. viii, 10, I will be a God to them and they shall be to me a people. A greater good than this can neither be promised, or bestowed. It contains the very substance of all that is requisite to ennoble the soul and make it superlatively happy. As therefore, the covenant made with Abraham promised the greatest blessings that any human creature is capable of enjoying, and the very same, in express words, that are contained in the covenant of grace, surely it must be the very same covenant, or if it is not the same, there must be two covenants, promising the very same things, which is highly absurd.

2. The apostle testifies, that believers under the gospel are the spiritual seed of Abraham, and, consequently, that they are heirs of the promise of Abraham's covenant; and if so, then surely his covenant must have been the covenant of grace, since it was the same that believers are now under, and will be to the end of the world, Gal. iii, 29. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's ~~seed~~ and heirs according to the promise. What promise does the apostle allude to in the verse just now quoted? Surely to the promise mentioned in the covenant which he made with Abraham, that he would be a God to him and to his seed after him. It is plain then, that the covenant which promises this, and of which all believers under the gospel are heirs, must be the covenant of grace.

3. The apostle tells us, that the covenant with
Abraham

Abraham, was confirmed of God in Christ, Gal. iii, 17. And this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. Now, sir, it is certain that no covenant, made with man was ever confirmed of God in Christ, but the covenant of grace; for there was no mediator in any other covenant; therefore Abraham's covenant was a covenant of grace, and substantially the same with that now in force under the gospel dispensation.

4. We are abundantly assured, that Abraham was justified by faith, as all believers are under the gospel. Rom. iv, 3. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness, but no covenant in the universe ever did or can admit of justification by faith, except the covenant of grace. Therefore, as all true believers have communion with Abraham in this grand covenant privilege of justification, and are justified on the same terms with him, this conclusion flows from the premises as easy and as necessarily as the stream rolls from the fountain, that if believers are now under the covenant of grace, Abraham was also. Let me add, to this, the scripture assures us in plain language, that the gospel was preached to Abraham in that article of his covenant, in thee shall all nations be blessed. Therefore, if the gospel contains the covenant of grace I hope the point will be given up.

From the whole, I think this conclusion may be fairly drawn, that the covenant made with Abraham, including his infant offspring was the same in substance with that which is now in force with believers under

the gospel, and differed only in the external mode of administration. For the matter of the covenant is the same, I will be your God and the God of your seed, and ye shall be my people. The condition of the covenant is the same; in both justification is by faith, without the deeds of the law. The mediator of the covenant is the same, Jesus Christ. The sacraments under each administration, though they consisted of different rites, had the same spiritual use and meaning. Hence the Apostle asserts, that the church of Israel, under Abraham's covenant, by incidents and actions, which had a typical reference to the sacraments, did eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink, with believers under the gospel, for they drank of that rock that followed them and that rock was Christ. Thus, sir, I think it appears beyond all reasonable contradiction, that the covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed was a covenant of grace and substantially the same with that, of which the spiritual seed of Abraham are heirs, under the gospel. It cannot be fairly objected to the above conclusion, that the land of Canaan was included in Abraham's covenant, and that therefore, it was not a covenant of grace; for temporal blessings are also included in the gospel covenant. Godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN B. BAICH.

LETTER III.

REVEREND SIR,

STRONG indeed must be your prejudices, and great must be your blindness: if after having read the preceding letter, you shall still continue to think and say, that the covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed was not a covenant of grace and the same for substance which is now in force under the gospel. Still more will you prove yourself to be warped by prejudice and blinded by ignorance, if after you shall have perused this letter you should hold and profess to believe, that circumcision was no sign or seal of the covenant of grace and was not by God's appointment to be administered to the infants of covenanted parents. That it was the token, sign or seal of Abraham's covenant you see in the very institution, Gen. xvii, 11, 12. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your forekin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and thee: and he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed, he that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money must needs be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. Again the apostle tells us, that Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, that is a seal of the covenant of grace; for what has faith to do with the covenant of works? Now that this outward sign or seal of the covenant was by God's appointment, administered to the
 infant

infant posterity of Abraham will not be denied by any who are well acquainted with the history of the old testament. I could, sir, bring texts in abundance in confirmation of it; but I will neither affront your understanding, nor yet the understanding of any reader, in order to prove what you will all readily acknowledge. Now from these two propositions, that the covenant which God made with Abraham was the covenant of grace, and that circumcision was the sign, token, or seal of that covenant, and administered to infants, by God's appointment, it does follow as plain as any consequence can follow, that the children of covenanted parents were once included in the covenant of grace. That this was the case of Abraham's children has been abundantly proved, and that it was the case of the Israelites under the Mosaical dispensation is abundantly evident in Deuteronomy xxix, 10, and onward. Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God: your captains of your tribes, your elders and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives and the stranger that is in your camp: from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water, that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God and into his oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day, that he may establish thee this day, for a people unto himself, and that he may be to thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. Observe, sir, how their little ones are made partakers in this solemn transaction. He then, who denies that children were taken into this covenant virtually denies this to be the word

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of God. Nay it is evident from the constant practice of circumcising children, that they were always included with the covenanted parents, and on this footing that sign of the covenant was put upon them. Since, then children of covenanted parents were by God himself admitted into covenant, they must still be acknowledged by him, as parties under the new administration of the same covenant; for a privilege once granted to the church must continue through all ages, unless the giver is pleased to revoke it. But that the interest which children have in the covenant is a privilege, the apostle plainly proves in his answer to the question what advantage then hath the Jew? And what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way. David acknowledged it a privilege and plead it before God. I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid. Now if this is a privilege and God has once granted it to his church, when, I pray, has he revoked it? Never, never, never. There is not one single text in all the Bible, which teaches, either directly or by consequence that children under the gospel should be debarred from being partners with their covenanted parents, in the covenant of grace and the privileges of it. There is nothing, in the nature or constitution of the covenant under the gospel, which, even bears the appearance of excluding them. No reasoning drawn from their incapacity will avail; for they are as capable of the sign or seal of the covenant of grace *now* under the gospel as they were under the law. I therefore, must believe, since God did of old receive infants into covenant, and since he has not debarred or cut them off from this privilege, and since no good reason can
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be given, why they should be excluded, that they ought still to be reckoned as parties in his covenant, and that they are entitled to baptism, the outward token, sign or seal of it.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH.

LETTER IV.

REVEREND SIR,

IN the process of this Epistle I shall endeavour to prove that baptism is a sign or seal of the very same covenant which God made with Abraham, that it is, instituted in the room of circumcision, and therefore, ought to be administered to the children of professing parents.

1. If the covenant which God made with Abraham was a covenant of grace, an everlasting covenant, as has been proved, then, baptism must be a sign or seal of the same covenant, and must have been instituted in the room of circumcision, just as the Lord's supper was instituted in the room of the ancient passover; and this the apostle Paul, plainly asserts to be the case, Col. ii, 11. In whom also ye are circumcised, with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism. Here it is
necessary

necessary to observe that the church at Colosse were teazed with a number of teachers, who urged on them the necessity of circumcision. The apostle informed them that they were complete in Christ, without the application of that ordinance, or Jewish rite, since they had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, which he calls the circumcision of Christ, or as it might be rendered, the christian circumcision, which exactly answers the spiritual use and design of that institution. What then can be meant by the circumcision of Christ, but baptism? It cannot be the circumcision which Christ received, when an infant; for that was the Jewish rite against which the apostle was arguing. It cannot be the spiritual circumcision of the heart, for this is mentioned in the foregoing clause and stiled circumcision without hands. And to understand this circumcision of Christ to be the same, would make an unreasonable tautology; as if he had said, ye are circumcised with the spiritual circumcision, by the spiritual circumcision, which would be palpable nonsense. But the apostle has put it beyond the possibility of doubt; for he explains the circumcision of Christ to mean, their being buried with him in baptism. The plain sense, then is, ye have the mystical intention of that Jewish rite, in the circumcision of Christ, which is a being baptized in the name of the Lord.

2. Baptism signifies the same thing as circumcision, and we may therefore, conclude, that baptism was instituted in its room. Did the blood of circumcision point to the blood of Jesus Christ, as that by which guilt was removed? So does the water used in baptism. Did circumcision signify our corruption by nature,

nature, and our need of regeneration and purification by the influences of the holy spirit? So does baptism. Was circumcision the sacrament of admission into the church of Israel? So is baptism the sacrament of admission into the christian church. Was circumcision a badge of relation to the God of Israel? So is baptism a badge of relation to Christ. And, was circumcision a sign or seal, of the covenant of grace? So is baptism. The analogy in these and many other particulars, that might be mentioned, plainly shew that baptism was instituted in the room of circumcision.

3. If baptism does not come in the room of circumcision, then, we have no ordinance answering to that Jewish rite, as it respects children, and consequently, the christian church, by the coming of Christ has been deprived of a sacrament, which was of singular advantage under the Jewish dispensation; for the profit of circumcision was much every way, in the judgment of Paul. If so, then, fir, the christian church has lost much every way, as it has nothing appointed in its room. We find that other institutions, under the old testament are supplied by something answerable, in the new. In the room of the passover we have the Lord's supper: instead of the Jewish priests we have gospel ministers: instead of the meeting of the tribes, in the temple, we have now our christian assemblies: instead of the seventh-day sabbath, we have the first day of the week. Does nothing then succeed circumcision? Is a divine ordinance totally lost, and blotted away from the church of God? Surely such a supposition is highly absurd. But if any thing does succeed it, baptism certainly stands the fairest for its successor,

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as it has the same use and meaning and is a sign of the same covenant.

Now if baptism succeeds circumcision as a sign of the same covenant, is it not an undeniable inference, that it ought to be administered to the same subjects, as circumcision was : that is, to the infants of covenanted parents ? Could that circumcision of Christ which the apostle calls baptism, have satisfied his Jewish hearers, if it was not allowed to extend to their children as well as the circumcision of Abraham ? They were enraged at Paul, we are told, when he taught the Jews, who were among the Gentiles that they ought not to circumcise their children. Acts xxi, 21. Therefore his telling them that baptism was the circumcision of Christ and took place instead of the ancient rite, would have been no satisfaction to them, had it been for adults only ; and not for their infant children. The apostle, then must have intended it for both, or else he would have given no satisfactory answer to the plea of the Jews for retaining circumcision.

I have now shown, sir, that Abraham's covenant was a covenant of grace, that circumcision was a sign or seal of that covenant, and by God's appointment administered to the infant posterity of Abraham and the Jews ; that baptism is a sign or seal of the same covenant, and therefore ought to be administered to the same subjects, namely, the infant children of covenanted parents ; in as much as their ancient right to this sign or seal has never been abrogated.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH.

LETTER V.

REVEREND SIR,

THE next thing which claims my attention, and to which I would wish to challenge yours, is to shew what evidences we have in the word of God, that the baptism of infants was the common practice both of the apostles and primitive churches. I chuse to draw my chief evidences from the word of God, because that may certainly be depended on; and because in your seven letters, you appear to treat with contempt all other historical inductions.

Now the evidence we have that the apostles and primitive fathers did baptize infants is of two kinds.

1. Their acknowledging the covenant relation of children under the gospel as well as under the law.

2. The strong presumption we have, that there were infant children among those whom they did baptize.

1. Then it is indisputably evident, that the apostles did allow the covenant interest of children under the gospel as well as under the law. See to this purpose Acts ii. 39. For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call. The occasion and the proper meaning of these words will be shewn in what follows. In the context we have an account of that remarkable divine energy which attended the first gospel sermon after the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, awakening in the hearers that most anxious and important enquiry, 'Men and brethren what shall we do?' We have also the apostles
answer

answer to this momentous and weighty interrogatory ; repent and be baptized 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 : that is, return unfeignedly from sin to God, through Jesus Christ : submit to the grace and government of this divine redeemer ; make a solemn, public profession of this submission, by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and your baptism shall be an external sign of the remission of sins, and of the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

This exhortation evidently consists of two branches, each of which is urged with a distinct motive. The first is repentance or a turning to God through Christ. This is urged with the encouraging motive that they shall receive the forgiveness of sins and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. The second branch of the exhortation is a submission to this new dispensation of the gospel covenant by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. This is urged with the motive in the text ; for the promise is unto you and unto your children, as if he had said, the promise which encourages you to enter into this covenant by baptism is primarily to you and to your children, as the descendants of Abraham and secondarily, to as many of the gentiles who are yet afar off and to their children as the Lord our God shall call. It is plain, then that this promise, whatever is intended by it, is urged as a reason why they ought to submit to this new dispensation of the gospel, and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

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This reason, then, must hold good with respect to all those to whom the promise is made ; but the promise is made equally to them and to their children ; it is, therefore, an equal reason why they and their children should be baptized : that is if the promise being made to them was a reason, why they should be baptized, as the Apostle expressly declares, then the same promise extending to their children must be an equal reason, why baptism should be administered to them. Indeed, sir, I cannot possibly see how the Apostle's argument can have any more force in it with respect to parents, than it has with respect to children. The sum of the argument is plainly this, the promise is to you, therefore, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ : but the promise is to your children also, therefore, let your children be baptized is a necessary consequence. indeed to suppose their children excluded from baptism would render the Apostle's argument very confused and inconclusive : for then it must stand thus : the promise is to you, therefore, be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus : the same promise is equally to your children ; yet let not your children be baptized, for they are not the proper subjects of such an ordinance. And what an absurdity is this ? how easily and rationally might the Jews have objected and said, if the promise to our children is no reason why they should be baptized, then, neither is the promise to us any reason why we should submit to this new mode of initiation into the church of God, and therefore, there is nothing at all in the argument.

The

The Jews to whom the Apostle is speaking, knew very well, that under the ancient dispensation of the covenant their children were always included with their covenanted parents, and that the promise of Abraham's covenant had always run in that tenor; when, therefore, the Apostle is persuading them to come under this new dispensation of the covenant, he assures them, that their children are still to continue in the possession of their ancient privileges, for that very promise which included them under the law, does now equally include them under the gospel: for observe he does not say the promise *was* to you and your children; but it *is still*, otherwise they might naturally be supposed to object and say, that their children were likely to be in a worse condition under the gospel than they were under the law, which must have greatly strengthened their prejudices against the evangelical dispensation. The Apostle, therefore, precludes any such objection by informing them, that they can lose nothing by submitting to this new dispensation of the covenant; for that, the privileges of the gospel should by no means be more confined and limited, than those of the law; but on the other hand should be more extended and enlarged. For under the law the promise was only to them and their children, as the descendants of Abraham; but now it shall extend to all among the Gentiles, and to their children also, whom the Lord our God shall call. This text then, thus explained, is a pregnant proof that the apostles did allow the covenant relation of infants under the gospel as well as under the law; and as that relation still subsists, surely, the infant offspring of covenanted parents have a

right to baptism and ought to be baptized. See also to this purpose Rom. xi, 16. For if the first fruit be holy, so is the lump, and if the root be holy so are the branches. Now by the first fruit, and by the root Abraham is intended, and by the lump and the branches his posterity, who by virtue of their interests in the same covenant partook of the same privileges with him, here then is plainly asserted the federal holiness of infants which you so strenuously denied. But I recollect another part, has been promised the public, namely, some animadversions on your late extraordinary production, "Entitled infant baptism deceased, or, seven Mountains over against seven Mountains," to this part I must in the next place attend.

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your humble servant.

STEPHEN B. BALCH.

LETTER VI.

REVEREND SIR,

BEFORE I proceed to my intended animadversions upon the main body of your work, the arrogant title you have chosen, the fable lines with which you have inclosed the ideal corpse of infant baptism: as also, the imaginary epitaph you seem to think you have inscribed upon the more than fanciful sepulchral stone, surely merit some attention. "Infant baptism deceased." When you made choice of this part of the title, sir, did you really recollect the following sentiments contained in that very word of God with which you proudly boast, you gave infant baptism the deadly blow? Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts. He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness; but a false witness deceit. And once more: wherefore putting away lying speak every man truth with his neighbour. Is infant baptism really dead? Has the practice of baptizing infants ceased altogether? Is not that sacrament administered to millions of infants every passing year? All these interrogatories answer themselves and their answers are diametrically opposite to what the motto of your book, ostentatiously and arrogantly proclaims. Could you think sir, in your unaccountable hardihood, that any of us were so ignorant as not to be able to discover your fallacy, or so pusillanimous, when discovered, as to be afraid of exposing it? I have made these remarks, in the hope that for the sake of your own character as a man of truth; for the sake of religion which should be held sacred by all, you will

will make a more judicious selection both of words and sentiments for the titles of any books you may have occasion to publish.

What you can mean by the last part of the motto I am entirely unable to determine. "Seven Mountains over against seven Mountains." Does it mean, that the city of Rome, the capital of the Pope's former territories, is built on seven hills, that this is the chief seat of the Roman church, which church is said to be replete with errors both doctrinal and practical, that infant baptism is one of those errors, which in your apprehension originated in that corrupt church, and that your seven letters are seven mountains which you have piled up, with the height, weight and magnitude of which you fondly hope to bring ruin on the abominable practice, infant baptism? If this is your meaning, sir, I think it far strained and awkward, to say no worse of it. Certainly you will be much mistaken in your calculations. Customs and habits of long standing are not easily eradicated. However much I wish that and every other church to be purged from errors both doctrinal and practical; yet I should feel it in all my soul, was she to yield up the gospel privilege of infant baptism. I am conscious, when I say this, that baptism is an ordinance upon the efficacy of which that as well as some other churches, including individuals of my own, put too much dependance. I am no advocate for exorcism, nor for preparing the baptismal water with cream, salt and spittle. The use of the sign of the Cross upon the face of such as are baptized, having no countenance in the word of God, I reject with strong conviction of its inutility and impropriety.

propriety. I believe it to be an invention of men whose hearts were much better than their heads.

Let me now, sir, attend to some matters of fact which seem to complete the idea I had formed of your ambition, for some time past. You have personified infant baptism, and as you would wish to make us believe, having slain her, you have judged her corpse worthy of funeral honours, of a grave, a sepulchral stone, a suit of mourning and an epitaph. I cannot tell whether you delivered a funeral discourse at her interment, or not : probably you did, as you seem to exult so much in her exit. We may easily conceive what kind of character you gave the deceased, when you performed her obsequies, from the bitter invectives you have thrown out against her in your letters. Your mouth must have been full of cursing and bitterness ; the poison of asps must have been under your lips. Surely, it cannot be wrong to say, that by way of peroration you added a fervent prayer, to the end, the corpse, might never have a resurrection to life. You wish to show us the dead body of infant baptism arrayed in melancholy crape. How absurd the idea to put the deceased in mourning, while the survivors and particularly, the instrument of her death, rejoice and triumph in her demise!

The epitaph whether graven on marble, or rather on materials of a coarser kind, and so, better suited in your judgment to perpetuate the memory of such an abominable miscreant as infant baptism, seems to deserve some attention ; not because it is just, not because it is sublime, not because it is strictly true, not because it is an emanation from an original genius ; but because it is the direct reverse of all these ; because
it.

it attempts to hold up the author, as excelling in natural and acquired abilities, and in a knowledge of divine things, far more, than all who have preceded, or, are his contemporaries, when in fact, these things cannot be predicated of him. I therefore wish, sir, to pull down your self-sufficiency, and to allow you a moderate share of genius and mental improvements. God is well pleased with the humble; while pride and vanity are his abhorrence. The members and ministers of your church have hunted and persecuted infant baptism from city to city, and have in their opinion aimed many a deadly blow at her from their origin in Germany, until the year 1801. During all this lapse of years they have been unsuccessful assailants; she has lived in despite of all they could do. But according to the tenor of the epitaph you have drawn on the tomb of your conquered, slain foe, the high honor of dealing on her, the deadly wound, has been reserved for you! Your arm more lucky than the rest has reached her heart and freed the world from bondage! What solemn mockery is this? Vanity superlatively great and contemptible is conspicuous in every part of this inscription. Well said inspiration, "vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild asses colt." Infant baptism, sir, cannot bear this insult, she even now breaks those supposed bands with which you thought to bind her.

She rolls away your imaginary tomb-stone and comes forth from the fictitious chambers of the grave in which you tell us you had deposited her. She not only "vapours in the verge of day" but walks abroad before the face of the meridian sun. She laughs at your insulting epitaph, and is neither afraid, nor ashamed to be seen by her implacable enemies. She
 smiles

smiles in approbation of her millions and millions of votaries, and among these she looks with an auspicious eye on Speece and Edwards* who withdrew their support from her for a time, that wandering in the path of error, for a season, and discovering, by means of Revelation's light, their mistake they might espouse her injured cause with renewed and increasing strength.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH.

* Messrs. Speece and Edwards were trained up in the principles of Presbyterianism and became preachers of some eminence in the Baptist Church; of late they have acknowledged their error, united themselves again to the Presbyterian connection and are likely to be useful labourers in the vineyard. Mr. Speece is of Virginia, and Mr. Edwards of New-Jersey.

LETTER VII.

RESPECTED SIR,

I AM now brought to my intended animadversions upon the main body of your work, and am sorry that my primary remark, in consistency with an attachment to truth, must be of the severe kind. There is observable, throughout the whole of it, or I am mistaken, something ostentatious and self-sufficient. Every class of ecclesiastics, doctors of divinity, cardinals, curates, popes and presbyters, seem in your judgment, to be equally, objects of your contempt. I wonder you did not aim a thunder-bolt at some of your own dignified clergy in particular: among them also, we find doctors of divinity, and they support their titles very well. But such a step would not have answered your design. You must have friends among that party whose cause you have espoused, or you would be friendless, for the Presbyterians can consider you in no other light than as a traitor, and betrayer: and I doubt not but many of your pious baptist brethren view you with suspicious eyes and secretly con over the old adage, "we love the treason but hate the traitor." However, you evidently wish to make us believe that your new-chosen denomination has been favoured with the exclusive privilege of being right, while all others, have been led blind-folded in the path of error and delusion. But even among the baptists, you seem to think you hold the pre-eminence yourself. Many of your baptist brethren, sir, have labored hard with head, pen and tongue for the establishment of adult, and the total exclusion of infant baptism: and as yet they have been
 unsuccessful

unsuccessful disputants : but in your judgment you have done the business effectually.— For in your last letter, like some mighty overbearing conqueror, you tell us, “ here lies and shall forever lie, the dead and rotten corpse of infant baptism, an odious carrion to humble souls, a stinking carcase in the nostrils of Jehovah. Lord Jesus the work is done.” Shall baptists patiently bear this arrogance in a new born brother? No, they cannot but see and that with marks of high contempt your rapid strides towards that zeal for pre-eminence which in truth has been observable in your whole deportment both before and since your conversion to the baptist faith. Be not angry, sir, when I tell you, that your boasting and pompousness are much more offensive to humble souls than the body of infant baptism which you have pretended to slay in reality, but have only done it in effigy. Let me put you in mind that pride and ambition were not made for man : by these sins the angels fell and how can any of the fallen sons of Adam hope to win by them? God does and will resist the proud while he gives grace to the humble soul.

In page 5 of your letters you tell us, that, “ The carnal wisdom, conformity to the world, blinded enthusiasm and misguided zeal of professors, the rage of novelty, superior talents, deep learning, high rank, metropolitan residence, princely patronage, errors interwoven with public standards, national or church membership, temporal interests, the fear of infamy or poverty, the prejudice of education and the very age of a practice have all united and conspired in giving origination to many scandalous abuses in religion and her ordinances.” You tell us in page 6, “ Thus,” that is, by

means

means of the things beforementioned, "for any thing I can see in the scriptures, may we account for the origin and progress of infant baptism." Your premises sir I deny : and if they are false, you know well your conclusion must of necessity be false also. When you reason with a logician, whatever you assert you must prove unless it be an axiom or self evident proposition. You have no right to assume or take for granted what will assist your own side of the argument, and injure that of your opponent's, when he denies the assumption. The heterogeneous group which you have thrown together, taken severally and conjunctly, may have done much mischief to religion and her ordinances, in various ways; but since you have offered no testimony, but your own bare word to prove that by means of their co-operation infant baptism has received her origin, I do here oppose my own bare word to yours, and fully, and unequivocally deny the truth of your assertion. Now you know in reasoning the bare word of one is good against the bare word of another, provided the parties have an equal claim to knowledge and veracity. The public must determine whether your claim and mine to these things be equal, or if there is a difference to which of us the superior part of the difference does belong. Let me for the present refer you to the first part of these letters for a direct proof, that neither men, nor yet the inventions of men, nor yet any thing human has given birth to the practice of infant baptism: nay, more, that it claims its origin from the father of lights from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, and every sacred and invaluable ordinance.

In page 6 you represent under the authority of your own bare word, the parents of children and some fa-
ther

ther of the church, as engaged in forming and moulding infant baptism into a vehicle for the purpose of conveying the souls of infants to the kingdom of heaven. The parents are anxious that the immortal parts of their children may be everlastingly happy. They are afraid and grieved, lest it may be otherwise: the father of the church soothes their sorrows and dries up their tears; tells them of a capital invention of his own which will infallibly accomplish the object of their wishes: this says he is infant baptism, let them only be washed or sprinkled with water and have the name of the trinity called over them and death may make a prey of their bodies; but their souls shall enjoy supreme felicity in heaven. The parents according to you, are entirely satisfied, and their venerable sire claims more of their regard and adds fresh laurels to his crown. All this, sir, is but another child of your own brain and equally defenceless with what you had roundly asserted before. I grant that some of the fathers put baptism for the thing that was signified or shadowed forth by it; but you have no direct proof drawn hence, that the generality of parents did therefore embrace that ordinance as the certain mean of securing salvation to their children. Besides in another part of your letters, you reject all testimony derived from the fathers and their general and provincial councils, in favour of infant baptism, and why would you now endeavour to assist your own arguments against the practice by their abuse of it? Upon the supposition that your narration is just and true, if it proves any thing it proves too much, for it proves that the abuse of any good thing is and ought to be sufficient ground for setting it aside. You may tell me perhaps

“ you

“ you have not proved infant baptism to be good and so your argument falls of course.” I am sensible it has been proved to be an ordinance of God’s appointment, in the other part of these letters and consequently it must be good. Indeed, sir, it will never do to argue from the abuse of what is good to the discontinuance of it. If you think so, I may tell you that it is good to keep the first day of the week holy; but that many abuse it, and ask you what must be done. You must answer, “ blot it out: let no one day be kept as a sabbath.” Again, I tell you meat and drink are good; but men abuse them in a most shocking manner: what is to be done in this case: “ you answer according to your own principles, let the use of them be discontinued.” Again, I tell you adult baptism is good for the initiation of those who have not been baptized in their infancy, into the visible church, if they make a previous profession of faith in Christ and walk accordingly; but this ordinance has been abused by thousands and is still liable to abuse; what step must be taken in order to remedy the evil? Adhering to your own principles you must answer; “ let it be discontinued.” Observe, sir, how effectually you destroy your own foundations and first principles. If you tell me God commands us to perform all the aforementioned duties; but does not command us to baptize infants; I answer, there is as plain a command for doing the latter as there is for doing any of the former duties. Ye shall circumcise your children was the express command of God under the law, and now under the gospel it runs, ye shall baptize your children. You must, you do stand confounded, sir. If infant baptism is abused the fault is not imputable to it,

it, but to those who make an improper use of it; and if meat and drink and the sabbath day are abused the fault does not lie in them, but is imputable to those who abuse them. In page 8 you tell us "beware, lest infant baptism, be nothing else but a mere tradition of the fathers, as I am heartily persuaded it is." Wonderful Argument! As though you had said, I have endeavoured to discover the scripture foundation on which the right of infants to the sacrament of baptism does rest: after long search I cannot find it. I have consulted the Fathers and primitive preachers who lived in the ages next to the Apostolical age; among their writings I see good reason to induce me to believe it was then practised; but as I cannot find it written in so many words in scripture, 'let your infants be baptized,' I reject the custom as unscriptural, and call it a mere tradition of these fathers, an invention solely and entirely of their finding out.— Since then I am convinced you must be convinced also.

Pin your faith to my sleeve and you shall avoid both danger and deception. This sir, appears to be a fair exposition of the passage just now quoted from your first letter: you assume, conclude, and then invite others to do as you have done. Your assumption without proof, may serve for leading strings to the weak and the blind, but the wise and the wary will be content with nothing, but clear demonstration brought forth by sound reasoning and confirmed by the unquestionable oracles of God. Let it be known to you sir, by charging the primitive fathers with the invention of infant baptism you have drawn a two-edged sword and pierced to the very death. your own

argument against infant baptism. Is it possible that the primitive fathers, who lived in the age next to the apostolical age, whose labours were at least, partially confined to, and distributed from the very pulpits of the apostles themselves, could have made so great an innovation upon apostolical precision and customs, as to give currency to infant baptism, if that had not been attended to and practised by the very disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ? Surely it is highly unreasonable to conclude that they either could, or would have done it. Consider, sir, these were holy men and under the guidance and direction of Jesus Christ the head of the christian church. Consider, that while among the Jews they often preached and administered the ordinances of the New Testament church in that very temple which had been rendered beautiful and glorious by the presence of their master. They would then, have been confounded, and their abominable scheme would have been rendered abortive and have been blasted by the brightness of the gospel and by the evidence which would have been produced against them, had they made so much as an attempt to innovate. Consider, they were on holy ground, shall I say, almost within the hearing of the voice of their Redeemer, who commanded, go baptize all nations, and then ascended to heaven. Consider, they were publishing the word of life in the towns and cities where the incarnate God and his own select disciples frequently displayed all their eloquence, and carried into execution the administration of all the ordinances of the gospel. Believe it, sir, some of the faithful would have cried bitterly against them and have

have brought them into that utter contempt which their conduct, unspeakably base, would justly have merited, had they invented and put in practice the baptism of infants. The argument then which you wished to use in proof that infant baptism was a tradition of the fathers is turned against yourself, whether *you* feel it or not; it strikes my mind with irresistible force.

I am altogether in the dark, as to the manner in which conviction of your error first made its way into your heart. "In a twinkling you found yourself standing upon nothing. Let any pedo-baptist account for this phenomenon!" I do not profess, sir, to explain the secret operations of your mind at that juncture of time, nor to tell what impressions might have been made upon it by any of the inhabitants of the invisible world: but if you will allow me to hazard a conjecture, as to the manner of your conviction I will make trial. You had books by you at the time in abundance, in favour of pedo-baptism; but not a single one against it to confront them, and yet you was convinced. Was you reading your bible at the time? If you answer yes, I ask what passages of it then claimed your attention? Did you in your dilemma, cast your eyes on Judges xv, 4, "And Sampson went and caught three hundred foxes and took fire brands and turned tail to tail, and put a fire brand in the midst between two tails," and therein expect to find a solution of your difficulties about baptism? If you were reading this or any such story, true in itself, yet it is not harsh to conclude that the tempter transforming himself into an angel of light, stepped in between you and such passages of
 God's

God's word as would have solved your doubts, and was permitted by a wise providence to cause some extraordinary appearance to pass before your natural or mental eyes. If, sir, instead of reading parts of the bible foreign to the subject you wished to investigate you had paid particular attention to Gen. xvii, 7, 10, 11, you would have accomplished the object of your pursuit, And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and thee and thy seed after thee : every manchild among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you, I say if you had paid particular attention to those passages in all probability the phenomenon would not have taken place : for in these you would have found an invincible proof for infant baptism. These texts, sir, compose the corner-stone on which the expediency, the propriety, nay more, on which the very necessity of pedobaptism rests. These texts would have poured a full flood of light and knowledge into all the dark regions of your *then* bewildered mind. Attending to the force and meaning of these you would have received full conviction that the sacrament of circumcision was bottomed upon their veracity and authority ; that infant baptism is the proper and legitimate successor of that legal ordinance and now ought to be punctually administered to the infant offspring of professing christians.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH.

LETTER VIII.

REFEREND SIR,

IN the process of this letter I shall animadvert upon some things which I think exceptionable in your second and third communications to your pious pedo-baptist friend. The point at which you wished to drive in your second letter is, to prove that, a balance of probabilities in favour of infant baptism does not make a sufficient foundation, on which the propriety of it ought to be rested. In attempting to illustrate and prove this, you have spent much time in a useless and unprofitable manner; for as far as I am able to determine, what you have said militates against plain facts, nay more, against your own every day's conduct and experience. I have already shewn you in some former letters that we, pedo-baptists, do not found our arguments in favour of infant baptism upon mere probabilities alone, but upon the testimony of God's word. There is, therefore, no need, that I should here be guilty of repeating what by turning back to some former pages, you may read at your leisure. Upon the supposition however, that we had nothing but probabilities to depend on for supporting the propriety of infant baptism; yet even these would be entirely sufficient for our purpose. Probable things are almost universally, certainties, but they stand in need of some illustration to let us see their truth. Surely you cannot so soon have forgotten your Latin. Do you not know that *probabilis* signifies a thing that can be established by proof and evidence? Do you not know that *probabilitas* is a latin word which designates something that has a preponderance of evidence in its favour?

your? Allowing then, for a moment that there is no express command in scripture for baptizing infants; yet probabilities drawn from the word of God, and from the practice of the primitive fathers are not to be rejected, but to be depended on as evidence justifying our conduct; for when we say it is probable, or there is a probability that infants should be received into the church by baptism; we say in other words, that the weight of evidence in favour of it is so great, that we ought not to entertain any doubt at all, about the propriety of it.

I readily grant that some truths are more easily illustrated than others; but truth is truth, whether we are masters of the evidence by which it is to be illustrated, or not. Probabilities, sir, move you to the performance of many duties, both civil and religious. You plow your fields and sow your seed under the influence of a probability that you will reap an abundant harvest; because God has said, that summer and winter seed-time and harvest shall not cease; and you conclude that there is a probability you will be amply repaid for your labour, but you have no express promise that you shall gather more than your seed, nay, you have no express promise that you shall even gather so much. Again, you are moved by a probability to keep the first day of the week holy; but you have no express command of God to do so, yet on that day we find you in your pulpit instructing the people, warning them of the danger they incur, and the sin they commit by spending it in idleness, &c. all this you do upon the strength of probabilities alone.

Again, you take great pains with the female part of your hearers, that they may be duly prepared for

a solemn approach to God in an ordinance of his son's appointment, that they may eat and drink at his table in an acceptable manner and hold communion with God and with one another. To these duties sir, you are moved by probability; for you cannot put your finger on the command in all the bible, enjoining it on women to communicate in the sacrament of the supper. Once more and I shall have done with this part of the subject: upon your own principles, you think none but believers ought to be admitted to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper; but you cannot search their hearts; and therefore in admitting persons to the one and the other of these ordinances you act according to probability. I hope, sir, I have now thrown some light upon this subject, and that, therefore, you will conclude with me in future that probabilities are not such contemptible things as you have hitherto accustomed yourself to believe they were. If then you cannot find in so many words in holy scripture, this command let the children of professing believers be baptized, without fail, yet surely the strong probabilities there are that the apostles and primitive fathers did baptize them, should have equal force in moving us to the administration of that sacrament to the infant offspring of covenanted parents, as the probabilities of reaping where we have sown, and that the first day of the week ought to be kept holy, should have in moving us to the cultivation of our fields and to the sanctification of that day.

The beginning of your third letter shews a front of unpardonable boldness: "It is allowed, you say, by all parties, that immersion in water is a valid mode of baptism, and the contest is only whether sprinkling be
alio

also valid." I am not prepared to inform you who, or how many of my brethren have made the concession of which you speak: but, sir, know this, that if in conversation with you or any other, I have unwarily said, that baptism by immersion into the water is a valid mode of baptism, I do not remember it, and if it has escaped from me, I do now solemnly retract it. I do it upon the best grounds, because I can find nothing in scripture declaring it to have been the case, and because I find strong reasons inducing me to believe that it was not practised by the apostles and primitive fathers. Marvel not, sir, you yourself will probably see good cause to believe as I do before I have done, with this investigation. Let us proceed soberly and examine the grounds on which you build your baptism by immersion. In Mat. iii, we have an account of John the baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins. The original word *En*, here translated *in* ought to have been rendered, *at* and then we should be taught by the account here given, that these immense multitudes which collected around John were baptized by him *at* or *near* the river of Jordan. We have many examples of the preposition *ex* being thus rendered in holy writ. John, iv, 45, Then, when he was come into Galilee the Galileans received him, having seen all the things which he did *at* Jerusalem *at* the feast. Both the *ats* here used in the original are *en*. See also John vii, 11, Then the Jews sought him *en*, *at* the feast. John xii, 20, And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship *en*, *at* the feast. I wish you, sir, to examine

mine these remarks with the eye of a critic, and I am not at all afraid but that you will say I have done justice. You also ground your preference of baptism by immersion on the sixteenth verse of this same chapter, "And Jesus when he was baptized went up straight way *out* of the water, but the preposition *apo*, here used does not signify *out of*, but *from*; so it should be rendered, Jesus went up straight way *from* the water. No doubt remains in my mind, then, but that Christ was baptized by John with some water taken either from Jordan, or from some fountain or stream near to that river. Mark's account of the baptism of Jesus is nearly in Matthew's words i, 9, 10, And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up *out* of the water. The preposition *eis* here used is in Greek authors often translated *at* or *to* as John i, 11, 1st Cor. xiv, 36, And the preposition *apo*, here rendered *out of* should be translated *from*, so it reads, he came up straight way from the water. You will not gather any assistance from the account given Acts viii, 38, of Philip's baptizing the Eunuch, and they went down both into the water. Remember both Philip and the Eunuch were in the chariot, it was necessary that they should alight from the chariot in order that the sacrament might be administered according to custom, therefore, they both went down from the chariot *eis*, *to* or *into* the water. Indeed, sir, the account of the great multitudes which gathered around John to be baptized of him seems to shut out the idea of his being able in any reasonable time to have baptized them all by immersion: Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan! The inhabitants

tants of these places were very numerous, and for any thing I can see to the contrary, it would have required many days, if not weeks to have immersed them all into the water. It would have required so many changes of raiment if decency was preserved among them that I think it highly absurd to conclude that all those multitudes were baptized by immersion. John must have stood for days together in water two feet deep, which to say nothing else looks very improbable.

It also appears very improbable, that the Ethiopian Eunuch, a man clothed with the authority of an ambassador should have alighted from his chariot, laid aside his plenipotentiary robes and have clothed himself in baptismal garments, and suffered himself to be plunged into the pond, or stream of water to which he and his instructor came, as they journeyed. In Acts ii, we have an account that three thousand were converted under Peter's sermon, and these three thousand were baptized the same day. Surely, not by immersion into the water; for it would have required the labour of four, perhaps, of twelve times the number of apostles present to have finished their initiation into the church of Christ, by immersion, in one day. The conclusion then is that they were sprinkled with water. We have an account in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the apostles, that Paul and Silas were arrested by the enemies of religion; and cast into prison, that the doors of the prison were unbolted by an earthquake; that the jailor into whose care they had been committed in his fright would have been guilty of suicide; but that Paul interposed, crying out "do thyself no harm, we are all here." The jailor was suddenly convinced and converted, and the same night he
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and all his were baptized. Now, sir, I ask you, is it likely that a river of water ran through the jailor's house, in which he and his whole family were immersed? Or, is it probable, that the apostles, beaten and mangled as they were, went with the jailor and all his family hunting for a water deep enough to cover their bodies, when they were baptized? I conclude no man will attempt to support the affirmative side of either of these questions.

Beaten, sir, from one *supposed* strong hold to another, we think I hear you anxiously inquire, "what must I do?" "To what last refuge can I now betake myself, that, like a valiant warrior, I may maintain my ground and preserve my favourite mode of baptism, by immersion, from the rude assaults of my unwearied implacable foe?"

In this dilemma you make a last retreat to Rom. vi, 4, Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death; and to Col. ii, 12, a parallel passage, buried with him in baptism. And as one, who is in what he thinks, his last citadel, wishes to strengthen and prepare himself for a desperate attack, you with gladness of heart lay hold on John iii, 23, And John also was baptizing in Enon, because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized; pleased with your present position and with the auxiliaries collected from the oracles of God you reach forth your hand and bring within your ramparts the original Greek word *Baptizo*. With all these weapons of the defensive kind, you expect to defend yourself against secret stratagem as well as public assault. Now you say, "come on I am girded with panoply divine. My feet stand on solid rock." Let me put you in remembrance, that

that through all the works of nature, what promises most performs the least. Let us not be bravos, proud boasters, but let us put on humbleness of mind.

Be calm and composed, while I examine the sense and meaning of what you have laid hold on as part of the foundation on which you rest the propriety of baptism by immersion. We are, says Paul, buried with him by baptism, into death. Now, sir, the plain meaning of the expression is this: We are in profession quite cut off from all commerce and communion with sin. We are buried in profession and obligation. It was our covenant and engagement in baptism. Now this being buried with Christ in baptism into death can no more allude to immersion into water, than what is called the crucifixion of the believer can allude to the crucifixion of Christ. It is plain that it is not the sign but the thing signified in baptism, that the apostle here calls being buried with Christ, and the expression of being buried refers to Christ's burial. As he was buried that he might rise again, so we profess by baptism to be cut off from a life of sin, that we may rise to a new life of faith and love. There is no more resemblance between our baptism and the burial of Christ, than there is between his crucifixion and the Lord's supper, the former of which is intended to be commemorated by the latter. The passage from Colossians is parallel to that, already explained so that I need not repeat here what has just been set down. John iii, 23, comes next in order to be considered. John the baptist, was baptizing at Enon near Salim, because there was much water there.

Be so kind, sir, as to examine the original and you will find the words to be *adata pella* which really signify

fy many small springs or little rivulets of water. The reasons why John chose to repair thither to administer the sacrament of baptism were, because such great multitudes flocked to him for baptism, whom it would have been inconvenient to baptize in houses, and because Enon was a delightful vale where he often preached, and because by the springs which issued from a small eminence the people might be supplied with water in that warm climate. So, sir, our churches are always built contiguous to a spring or springs that we may have water at hand for baptizing and also for quenching our thirst.

My dear, sir, the foundations of the strong tower in which you trusted are almost entirely undermined and removed. Your building had a sandy foundation. One who cannot lie has said such shall inevitably fall. You have nothing now on which you can ground the propriety of baptism, by immersion but the original word *Baptizo* which you and some others think signifies to dip or plunge into water. Here again, sir, you will find your mistake. The original word *bapto* does signify to immerse into water, but *baptizo*, which is what grammarians call a diminutive verb is derived from *bapto* and signifies to sprinkle with a small quantity of water. Now *baptizo* is the word which is as far as I know, universally used where persons in the New Testament are represented as being baptized.

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your humble servant.

STEPHEN B. BALCH.

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L E T T E R IX.

REVEREND SIR,

HORACE, a poet of great celebrity, tells us, "no man becomes all at once very wicked." By which he means that from comparatively small beginnings in sin, the way is prepared and the door is opened for the commission of numerous and various iniquities, until, at length the measure of the sinner's transgressions is filled to the very brim. I believe the same may be said of, and applied to those persons who have just begun to deviate from pure principles and doctrines of the religious kind. In the first instance of degeneracy their errors are comparatively small and innocent; but having denied one principle, doctrine, or ordinance of our holy religion, that denial prepares the way and opens the door for the denial of more, until at length, they seem by sophistry, to undermine and explain away what others consider as the very pillars on which the whole of christianity does, actually, rest. Indeed, sir, it would greatly rejoice my heart, could I conclude, on just grounds, that these remarks were not suited to you; but I fear your late conduct fully justifies the personal application of them. First you denied the right of infants descended from professing parents, to the sacrament of baptism. Then you rejected the force of probabilities in establishing truth, and thirdly, in your fourth letter to your pious friend, you deny that the covenant of grace was, under the law, accompanied with any seals, and you deny that *now* under the gospel it hath any seals. For in page

42 of your seventh letter you write thus, "The Westminster confession of faith and catechisms with pedobaptist defences of their practice, almost universally style baptism a seal of the covenant of grace, and as a foundation of this notion, circumcision is held to be a seal of the same covenant." You deny the whole of this as unscriptural; nay more, you call it a mere fabrication on a single solitary text in Rom. iv, 11, And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.

Now, sir, in order to shew you and all who may read these letters, that the explanation you have given of the above cited passage is erroneous. I propose to examine the meaning of the context as well as the text itself, and to lay it before you in as simple and as plain a manner as I am able. This done I encourage the hope that you will see your error and correct it. For if you will abide by scripture and by good and necessary consequences flowing from scripture, you shall see, though you have utterly denied, that the covenant of grace had formerly, under the law, or now hath under the gospel, any seals belonging to it, that circumcision was under the law the sign or seal of it, and that baptism is *now* under the gospel the sign or seal of the same covenant. And, if sir, you seek after truth with an honest heart, I conclude, in a review of what shall be laid before you, your mistake will be discovered, and you will be ready to acknowledge your criminality in attempting to wring a meaning out of Rom. iv, 11, which it never did contain.

In the close of the third chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans, the apostle drew this conclusion from undeniable premises, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. In the fourth chapter he undertakes to confirm the truth of that conclusion, by bringing the Patriarch Abraham as an example, who did not find justification and acceptance with God, by virtue of his circumcision in the flesh, nor by any other works of obedience performed by him to the law of God: but on the contrary he found them by virtue of his faith which was imputed and counted to him for righteousness. Now from this instance of Abraham's justification by faith, the apostle infers the justification of all believers with him by the operation of the same faith. For none can reasonably believe, but that the children are justified by the same means and after the same manner that their father Abraham was justified, but he was justified by faith, therefore, that all believers, who are his spiritual seed, are also justified by faith, is a necessary and fair conclusion.

These remarks comprehend the main design and scope of the fourth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. Let us now attend to the force of his reasoning.

Verfes 1 and 2 run thus, What shall we say then that Abraham our father as pertaining to the flesh hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. As if the apostle had said, shall any one affirm that Abraham our father obtained righteousness, by, or according to the flesh; that is by being circumcised in the flesh, or by any works of righteousness which he
had

had done? Surely, no: For if Abraham was justified by circumcision, or by any other works of his own he hath whereof to glory; that is he hath ground of boasting in these works by which he was justified: but it is manifest that he hath not whereof he may, boast in the presence of him who is of spotless purity and can neither behold sin nor sinners but with marks of abhorrence and detestation. Therefore he was not justified by circumcision nor yet by any other works of his own.

The apostle proceeds verses 3, 4, and 5, to say, For what faith the scripture, Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not; but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. As if the apostle had said the scripture gives this account of Abraham's justification. It was by faith alone. He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. In the 4th and 5th verses we have the Apostle's argument to prove that Abraham was justified by faith and not by works. Suppose says he, that he had been justified by works, then the reward would have been a debt due to him for his works, and consequently it could not have been at all, of grace. Abraham's reward was God himself, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward faith God to him, Gen. xv, 1. Now if Abraham had merited this by the perfection of his holiness and obedience it would not have been an act of grace in God, but Abraham might have demanded it with as much confidence as any labourer in the vineyard demands his wages. But this cannot be, it is impossible for innocent

cent man, much more for guilty man to make God a debtor to him, Rom. xi, 35, Or who hath first given to him and it shall be recompensed to him again? God wills that grace shall have all the glory in the justification of every believer. Therefore to him that worketh not; that is, to him that can pretend to no such merit, nor shew any worth or value in his work which may answer such a reward, but disclaiming any such pretension, casts himself wholly upon the grace of God in Christ, in the exercise of a lively, active, obedient faith; to such an one faith is counted for righteousness: that is, it is accepted of God as the qualification required in all those who are pardoned and saved.

The 6, 7, and 8 verses fall next under our consideration. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of that man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. In these verses the apostle subjoins the testimony of David to the example of Abraham. He describes the unwasting happiness of that man to whom God imputeth righteousness, that is, the righteousness of the mediator without any works of the man's own, brought before God to be justified by, either in whole or in part. Sin in this view, with respect to the offence is remitted; with respect to its filth it is covered out of sight; with respect to the punishment due on account of sin, it is not imputed. Verses 9 and 10, Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? The apostle here moves the question whether the circumcised Jews had an exclusive right to pardon and justification by faith or whether the Gentiles had not also

also a right to the same blessings, though they were uncircumcised. He adjusts and settles the matter very rationally. Since faith, says he, was imputed to Abraham for righteousness many years before he was circumcised; therefore the uncircumcised Gentiles as well as the circumcised Jews shall by faith be made partakers of the same blessedness to which Abraham was entitled by his faith before he was circumcised.

We are now brought to the eleventh verse, And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised. What the holy spirit of God, who dictated these words to St. Paul, did and does mean by them I shall now endeavour to search after, find out and set before your eyes, as well as before the eyes of all who shall read these letters. I know if I am guilty of adding to, or of taking from the word of God he will judge me with severity and condemn me with justice. I shall therefore act with rigorous caution. What I know not O Lord do thou teach me. Lighten my darkness, O thou inaccessible light. Let all difficulties be removed and let us see and even feel the appropriate meaning of this passage of thy unalterable word.

He received the sign of circumcision. The pronoun *He* designates Abraham, the father of the faithful, who is here said to have received the sign of circumcision, or as the learned Piscator hath it, he received circumcision. In the next words we are told what this circumcision was. It was a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had before he was circumcised. God had promised him a son from whom Messias was to spring. Abraham believed this promise :

promise : that is, he firmly believed that it would be fulfilled, and God counted or reckoned that faith or that belief which he exercised in that promise for righteousness, Genesis xv, 6. Fifteen years afterwards it pleased God to renew this covenant with Abraham a full account of which we have in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis. Something was added, that was circumcision. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee ; every manchild among you shall be circumcised. The faith then which Abraham exercised in the promise which God made to him fifteen years before the renewal of the covenant which had the addition of circumcision is that faith of which Paul speaks in this disputed passage. It is the faith which he had while he was uncircumcised. This conclusion, sir, you deny in page 50 of your letters. But you have nothing by which you can support your denial of it, but because the words *he had* are not in the original, but are supplied by the translators. The general scope and design of the apostle in the context contradicts what you assert. Paul labours to prove that Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised and we are sure he refers to that faith which he exercised in God's covenant promise made to him that he should have a son from whom as concerning the flesh Christ should spring.

Now, sir, in a former letter I have proved that the covenant which God made with Abraham was a covenant of grace and the same for substance with that which now subsists under the gospel dispensation. And I have also proved that circumcision was a seal of that covenant. Repetitions are needless, nay they are generally

nerally superfluous ; but here I will add, a few things by way of illustration.

Whatever the sign of circumcision was, and whatever that meant, that very same thing is meant and intended by the seal. For the original word *Semci-on*, here translated sign and the original word *Sphragidz* here rendered seal, are in grammatical construction put in the same case according to the rule, "Words that signify the same thing are and ought to be put in the same case." Well now, since this covenant which God entered into with Abraham was the covenant of grace and since circumcision is incorporated with the very covenant ; nay since it is expressly said to be the sign of it, and then to diversify and explain the privilege, since it is called the seal of the covenant, he must be blindness itself, nay he must be ignorance in the abstract who will boldly pronounce that circumcision was not a seal of the covenant of grace under the old dispensation of that covenant. And, since it has been proved that baptism is the legitimate successor of circumcision it does follow by good and necessary consequence, that baptism is the sign or seal of the same covenant under the gospel dispensation.

You ask what is signed and sealed ? I answer a sign or seal always supposes a preceding contract or bargain, and it is the case in the matter before us. God promises in the covenant of grace to be a God to his people, and they promise to be his servants, the bargain concluded is ratified by a sign and seal, so in the covenant of grace under the law, when entered into by the Almighty on the one hand and by Abraham the representative of the faithful on the other, it carried a sign or seal to instruct him and to confirm his faith in the

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the fulfilment of the promises it contained. Even so baptism, the sign or seal of the covenant of grace under the gospel, seals to all the faithful the fulfilment of all the promises of God made to his people, and they on their part bind themselves and their infant offspring to be his servants and people, nay more by having the seal of God's covenant applied to them they bind themselves as by a military oath to be his to all intents and purposes. If you ask how infants can do this, I answer by asking you how the infants of the Israelites were made parties in the covenant? I ask again how infants can be bound in civil transactions by their parents? Now, sir, in a serious review of what has been said above, you will not deny but freely acknowledge that your explanation of Rom. iv, 11, was erroneous. You do know that the covenant of grace had circumcision for a seal under the old dispensation and now hath baptism for a seal.

You tell us page 46, that God's word is true and that his promises will be fulfilled whether he binds himself to the fulfilment of them by seals, or not. I know it my dear, sir, he is not a man that he should lie. But he sometimes does more for the comfort, consolation and confirmation of his people than simply to promise a thing; hence the oath of God is mentioned; as I live saith the Lord. That by two immutable things viz. the oath and the promise of God, we might have strong consolation. Even so Abraham would not have doubted, had God only told him that he would be a God to him and his seed; but when to this he added the seal by which he bound himself to the accomplishment of it, it was no wonder that he was strong in faith giving glory to God. You seem to laugh at Mr. Cowles.

Cowles a pedo-baptist, of New-England who says, as circumcision was a token in the flesh; so baptism is a token on the flesh. Let me ask, sir, is not baptism as durable a sign or seal of the covenant of grace as the rainbow is of that covenant which God entered into with Noah, that he would never again destroy the world by the waters of a flood? Surely it is. The former is frequently administered and then we in an especial manner remember God's covenant of grace: the latter appears sometimes and then our faith is confirmed in the truth of God's promise that a universal deluge shall not be repeated.

You tell your pious friend, page 55 "But now if you insist upon it with Mr. Cowles that circumcision was the door of the Jewish and baptism is the door of the christian church, you must prove that the doors are exactly of the same width, or else say you, you are not arrived at your necessary consequences." The doors, sir, I contend are of the same width: professing believers and their offspring together with the servants which they had purchased were to be circumcised. Now professing believers and their offspring and servants are to be baptized according to our standard. But infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized, says our Catechism. You seem to think that baptism cannot fill the room of circumcision because females were not circumcised. Stop, sir, and consider the import of the following passages of God's word, and then say as you have said, if you dare. Read Judges xiv, 3, Then his father and his mother said unto him, is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to
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take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? Genesis xxxiv, 14, And they said unto them we cannot do this thing to give our sister unto one that is uncircumcised for that were a reproach unto us. See also to this purpose Exodus xii, 3, 4, Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, in the tenth day of the month they shall take unto them every man a Lamb, according to the house of their fathers a lamb for an house. And if the household be too little let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls, every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

These passages, sir, clearly designate that females were considered as circumcised in the males, consequently when they are baptized the door of circumcision and the door of baptism appear to have the same width. As to the Jewish rite being performed on the eighth day and no attention paid to the performance of baptism on that day, I count it so trifling as scarcely to deserve notice. Let me, however ask you if you do not think that the Lord's supper succeeds the Jewish pass-over, you answer yes. Did not Christ celebrate that pass-over and the supper by night? And do you think it essential that its successor should be attended to in the night? You think no such thing.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH.

LETTER X

REVEREND SIR,

IN looking over your three last letters, I can observe very little in them, which as far as they oppose infant baptism, has not been entirely overthrown by what you will read in the first and second parts of this pamphlet. However, that I may effectually destroy all your gauzey sophistry, and impose upon you, in future, eternal *nonpius* and *science*, I will make a few remarks upon some passages of these last communications of yours; that even the supposed force of them may be fully annihilated, for ever. Let not anger burn in your heart against me. Solomon tells us, anger rests in the bosom of fools. Page 57 of your letters informs me, “that being in the covenant of grace and having from God the promise of eternal life, does not entitle the covenantee or promisee to any external ordinance whatever, even though that ordinance was a seal of the covenant of grace according to your notion of seals?” The affirmative of this proposition you declare can neither be established by scripture, nor by good and necessary consequences flowing from scripture. Wonderful indeed! Another proof that a man does not, all at once, become very corrupt in religious matters. But the stream of corruption in your heart is gathering strength: from small beginnings, it swells in its progress, and soon I fear, you will be overwhelmed and smothered by its greatness, I have firmly believed, sir, for more than thirty years, that every blessing which is calculated to make believers happy is included in the covenant of grace. Can you blame me? My bible
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taught me to think so. Ever the afflictions of the believer shall, in the event, work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The covenant of grace, sir, is a full covenant, and contains every blessing both temporal and spiritual that is, in any measure, calculated to make the believer more like God, who formed him. Hence says inspiration, he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all how shall he not with him also freely give us *all things*? You bring Enoch, Seth and other Antediluvians as examples to confirm the truth of what you have asserted. These, I grant you, were pious men and faithful servants of the most high God. They bore a strong testimony against the wickedness of the ungodly, unrepenting multitudes, who were their cotemporaries. And reasoning from the goodness of God, we do not conclude rashly, when we say, that there is full ground to believe that by some sign or seal not communicated to us, the Almighty did wonderfully strengthen their faith in the promises made to them. Nay, we might run back with this remark and conclude that the primeval pair had a sign or seal of the external kind exhibited and applied to them after their shameful lapse from God, and after he shewed them tokens of compassion in delivering to them that first, most gracious promise, recorded in the book of Genesis, And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel. We are told, that the Lord made them coats of skins with which they might cover their nakedness. The stream of commentators which I have had opportunity of consulting determine, that those skins had been taken from beasts which had been slain by them

them for the purpose of sacrificing; if so, they must have had clear and just conceptions of the Almighty's intention in this transaction. In these types they must have seen Christ the antitype, the seed of the woman, who was to bring untold destruction upon the kingdom of the serpent. A flash of lightning from heaven for any thing we know to the contrary, might have set these sacrifices on fire, and have given them a faith so strong that the redeemer might have appeared in vision before them, as a suffering incarnate God. I have mentioned no impossibilities, I have mentioned no improbabilities : when Stephen, the first christian martyr was under the hands of his executioners and travailed in the pangs and spasms of a most excruciating death, he looked up stedfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; nay, the account given justifies us in saying, that the gates of the heavenly paradise were thrown wide open and the good man had a seal and earnest of that inheritance upon the enjoyment and possession of which he was presently to enter. Shall we not say, then in perfect consistency with good reason, and with the goodness and tender compassions of God, as well as in full consistency with what he hath frequently manifested and done to his chosen that both Seth and Enoch and the other pious antediluvians had some external seals of the truth of the covenant and promises of God applied to them? The scripture asserts that Enoch walked with God; that is, he held close communion with his maker, and his whole life was one unbroken chain of strict intimacy with and piety towards the sovereign of heaven. The truth is, the holiness of

Enoch

Enoch *alone* and his *translation* to heaven, seem to call, in unutterably strong language, upon reason itself to proclaim to the world that God did often by his visible presence confirm his faith in all the things that concerned an unseen, happy world. Seth also, was remarkably pious. In his days the waves of wickedness rose high; men were hardened against the fear of God. And literally speaking hell itself broke from below and overflowed the world, as extensively as the inhabitants of the earth were spread upon it. Did Seth hold fast his integrity in this widely extended and wide wasting guilt? Yes, then it was that he began to call on the name of the Lord. He was not only a true worshipper of God himself but he intreated, he besought, he even begged and urged these sons of indescribable wickedness and unexampled villainy to unite with him in acts of solemn, decent worship to the God of all their mercies. Can reason hear of the bold, the pious, the singular, and the mighty acts of Seth and still say, that he was only supported in the execution of these things by a dark promise which he could scarcely understand? No, reason's declaration upon the subject is, that God in some visible shape, had often conversed with him and had unfolded to him his eternal plan for the salvation of believers; that he had given him some sign or seal which confirmed him in the belief of the truth and fulfilment of every promise he had made in behalf of fallen sinful men.

Revelation informs us, that Noah, was a just man, and perfect in his generation and that he walked with God. This venerable patriarch was appointed by the Almighty, and his heart was prepared, through
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divine grace, not only to be a light, in his example, to the world covered with darkness and overspread with wickedness; but also, to bear a strong verbal testimony in favour of true religion and against every species of iniquity: hence he is represented as being a preacher of righteousness for the space of an hundred and twenty years. Noah and his family were saved from wide wasting ruin, brought on human as well as irrational kind, by a general deluge. God established his covenant with him and his after their deliverance, that the world should no more be destroyed by the waters of a flood. The divine promise, according to you might have been sufficient for the confirmation of Noah's faith, in the certain fulfilment of it: but God thought proper to order the matter otherwise. A seal, or token of the stability of the promise and the invariable certainty of its accomplishment must be added: hence the rainbow in the clouds for this express purpose. To that bow the venerable Patriarch and all succeeding generations might look, and then conclude, from undeniable premises that they were safe from universal inundation. In your account, sir, Abraham was in covenant with God twenty-four years before the sign or seal of that covenant was applied to him. You ask "Was Abraham all that time justly entitled to the seal?" I answer Abraham had the right from the moment of his becoming a believer; but God is a sovereign and has a right to distribute his gifts and favours to whomsoever, and at whatsoever time he pleases, he therefore, saw proper that Abraham should receive the seal of that covenant at the very time he did receive it, and not before; and neither

you,

you, nor yet any other of his creatures have a right to say to the Almighty by way of challenge what dost thou? Or why dost thou act thus? This, sir, can be nothing strange or new. Hath not every good man a right to the possession and enjoyment of heaven from the moment of his believing? Certainly. But God does not think fit to bestow them, until it pleases him to do so. Attending, however, to your method of ratiocination, you compel us to think and conclude, that God acts unjustly if he does not immediately give possession of whatever, in the course of his providence, any of his creatures may claim, as their right. Lot and Melchisedec brought as examples, to prove that an interest in the covenant of grace, does not secure to the covenantee or promisee any external ordinance whatsoever, were unhappily chosen to establish your position. You think they were not circumcised; I think they were. You ought to be consistent, sir; probabilities with you in some parts of your letter, go for nothing: yet here you cling to them with peculiar endearment, and because it is no where said, they were circumcised you assert they were not and as they were good men you crookedly enough draw the conclusion that the covenant of grace in which they were interested, did not secure them this external ordinance. Look, christian readers, at the man who a little time past, treated probabilities with sovereign contempt and now *Proteus* like, he takes them, though they are of the most doubtful kind, for undeniable premises, whence certain conclusions in confirmation of his favorite theme are drawn. Lot was the nephew of Abraham, trained up under the instruction and direction of his uncle. Now does it not appear quite reasonable,

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to conclude, that when Abraham and his decendants, and indeed all the Jewish nation, and all the servants bought with their money, were commanded to have circumcision, the seal of the covenant applied to them; that Abraham did take pains to have this important matter communicated to Lot and to every proselyte to the Jewish religion? Surely probability is on the affirmative side of this question; at least the probability is stronger on the affirmative than on the negative side.

Men of great and acknowledged merit, in literature, have found difficulty in discovering who Melchisedec was. Some have concluded he was Shem the son of Noah: others have found in him, Jesus Christ, as they supposed: a third class think he was a Canaanitish king; that he was converted by the grace of God from the heathenish to the Jewish religion. The last opinion appears to me the most probable. He was however, an eminent type of Jesus Christ and a remarkably pious man. Since he was a proselyte we may, therefore, conclude, that in his conversion he was favoured with a double portion of God's spirit, whose office it is, to lead the ignorant into the knowledge of all necessary truth. Conclude we then that that servant of God was brought acquainted with the covenant of grace in which he was immediately interested upon his change from nature to grace. We must also believe that he had a clear view of the covenant as made with Abraham, and of that seal affixed to it, by which *he, his, the Jewish nation,* all that were bought with their money and all proselytes were bound and as it were, sealed to God, and by which God did bind and seal the fulfilment of whatever was expressed
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and implied in the tenor of that covenant to them. Melchisedec being a priest of the most high God, did without all doubt worship and persuade others to worship him, in the way and manner prescribed by the Almighty. Now you know, sir, the Jewish religion was the only true religion then in the world; Melchisedec was then a priest of the Jewish religion, and as all of that religion were commanded to be circumcised, and as the priests were bound to circumcise others, so we have full good reason to conclude that Melchisedec was not only circumcised himself, but that he circumcised others. Your bringing forward this priest of God then as a proof that having an interest in the covenant of grace does not entitle one to the external seal of the covenant or any external ordinance whatever has done your sinking cause no good; but on the other hand, has done it great injury. Contradict it if you can. Let me in the next place, take notice of what you assert, page 83, of your letters. "Once more, if the common arguments used in support of infant baptism be really conclusive, they will prove with equal force the scripturality of infant communion." Are you really serious, sir? Have you yet to learn which are the very first elements of christianity? Must I tell you, because you know it not, that by baptism, infants are brought within the pale of the visible church; and that, by the Lord's supper the faith of christians arrived at something of mature age is intended to be strengthened and confirmed? Must I inform you because you are ignorant of it, that the one is the sacrament of initiation into the christian church and that the other is the sacrament of nourishment and confirmation? In the one the parents and guardians of children act in their behalf; because they
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are unable to do it themselves ; in the other the communicants act for themselves. The apostle tells us men are to examine themselves in a way of preparation for a suitable approach to God, in the sacrament of the supper ; but we know infants are incapable of examining themselves ; therefore, as they are incapacitated to attend to the *pre-requisites* of an acceptable communion ; so we know well, that they have an equal incapacity, if not greater to attend in an acceptable manner upon, and partake worthily, of that ordinance. Your assertion then is gone ; gone like the ‘ baseless fabric of a vision.’ Blame me not, sir, I am as merciful to you as I can be. You ought to have believed that hard blows would have been dealt out upon you when you wrote your letters. They sometimes rake by irony, and at other times pour insult upon the members of that church from which you have departed. We, sir, have feeling, as well as yourself and although we count it our duty to cultivate peace and good will among men ; yet we know how to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the faints.

Page 85 of your letters must in the next place be made the subject of some animadversion. There we read the following remarks. “ The manifest intention of the administrator, in any of Christ’s institutions, and baptism, *in particular* is an *essential* point in the administration by which the validity of that administration ought to be determined in the churches.” “ You deny it,” you say, speaking to me or any other of my sentiments. “ Well now say you, behold O man into what a deep thou art plunging. Your opinion is, that if the administrator proceeds under regular authority,
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derived from the church, his manifest intention to act with or against the gospel rule ; if he only retain the whole external form is not essential to a valid baptism. From hence say you, I conclude, it clearly follows, that when in the dark ages Charlemagne and the other murderers of the nations, by the instrumentality of understrapping priests baptized whole armies of infidels, at the point of the sword, the administrations by the gospel charity of pure churches ought to have been received as perfectly valid and sanctioned by the peaceful religion of Jesus." You proceed, " hence it also follows, that if a minister of the church turn infidel, and before deposition undertake to mock Christ in his ordinance, by baptizing his infernal companions for his own and their entertainment, whenever these persons offer to the church a credible profession of their faith, the said baptism ought to be esteemed pure and authentic." Let me now, sir, spend some time in examining the mighty premises whence you have drawn these strong conclusions. The minister who baptizes is to act under regular authority derived from the church and is to preserve all the external forms of baptism, but his good intention is wanting while he baptizes. You therefore conclude that such a baptism is not valid, and to establish your conclusion bring an example from the times of Charlemagne who had hundreds and thousands of infidels baptized by priests, at the point of the sword. Indeed, sir, I pity you—It seems these priests derived their authority for baptizing these infidels, from an absolute tyrant, and not from the church. Charlemagne cared little more for the true church of Christ than Lucifer himself. Under his authority the baptizers acted, and not under the authori-

ty of the church of Jesus Christ. Your other example of a wicked man turning infidel and baptizing his companions as full of unbelief as himself, is equally vulnerable as the former. As soon as a minister becomes an infidel he loses that authority which he derived from the church of which he was a member. It is true he may pretend to have authority, and he does hold it in appearance: but in reality his unbelief has deprived him of it. Such baptism however as that you make mention of would quickly rouse the ministers of any regular church to tear from him that authority which he held under them in appearance only. Add, to all this, that such a baptism as that of which you have spoken, did not retain the whole external form. Swords and bayonets were never intended to enforce baptism on any, by Christ and his apostles, nor did the great head of the church ever ordain, that any should make use of his own ordinance in sport and diversion. Baptism as well as other holy duties are to be done decently and in order. You have asserted, sir, in your proposition that the manifest intention of the administrator in any of Christ's institutions is an essential point in the administration by which the validity of that administration ought to be determined. Preaching the gospel is an institution of Christ you will acknowledge. Go ye therefore said the Saviour into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Well hear what Paul says about the manifest intention of preachers, and then hold what you do now hold if you think proper, Phil. i, 15, 16, 17, 18. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of goodwill. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But
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the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. Now, sir, you and St. Paul must hold the dispute. You contradict him and he flatly contradicts you. You assert and he denies. When put in a scale and weighed against Paul in corporal substance you would excel; but in a knowledge of theology he would stand before you as far as the most distant star is removed from the earth on which you tread.

The good and manifest intention of the administrator cannot be essential to the valid administration of baptism; because then the sacramental action would not be profitable according to the intention of God the principal agent in it, but according to the intention of the administrator, the inferior agent: and so the minister would be supposed to have more power in this business than God the author of the ordinance. Moreover, however, much it is to be wished, that the intention of every administrator of baptism should be good, yet it is plain that the validity of the administration does not depend upon that intention; because no one could then know whether he was baptized, or, not, unless he had a Revelation of it from heaven, or was able to search the heart of him who baptized him. The first of these he cannot expect; for revelations have ceased, since the canon of scripture has been accomplished. The second he is entirely unable to complete; for to search the heart is the prerogative of God alone. I the Lord search the heart, and I try the reins. According to your position then, sir, you cannot for your life, tell whether after being baptized
twice

twice you are yet baptized. Your first baptism, which I venture to say was the best of the two, you have renounced as good for nothing; and your second, performed by a man with the intentions of whose heart you are unacquainted, may according to your reasoning be ten times worse than nothing. You are in an awful dilemma, sir, I wish I knew how to advise you for your good. The intentions of your own heart are more known to you than those of any other man; I believe then, to come as near to a knowledge of the validity of your own baptism as you can you had better baptize yourself. Even in this case there would be some doubt; but if it was not well done you could but blame yourself; because your intentions were not good.

In page 86 you seem to blame us for admitting to the communion of our church, persons who may have been baptized by men whose intention in the administration of that sacrament was not manifest. You designate particularly Episcopalians and Methodists, who you suppose baptize every human creature, even contrary to the gospel, and contrary to what I conceive to be right. I have already shown you the weakness and fallacy of your assertion, that the intention of the administrator in the act of baptizing is to be considered an essential point by the churches in determining the validity of the baptism. In regard to Episcopalians and Methodists I never have had any scruples in admitting them to baptism, nor yet to the Lord's supper, provided they made a visible profession of religion and did by their example shew that they had a respect for holiness. Why should I? The articles of the Episcopalians are strong and sound, and as far as I know are in general supported by the
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word of God. The articles of the Methodist church are not so full as the articles of the Presbyterians or Episcopalians; but the conduct of multitudes of them seems to be according to the gospel, when, therefore, judging by the only rule in the use of which we can be safe, by their fruits ye shall know them, I determine that my Episcopalian or Methodist neighbour is pious, I cannot possibly have any scruple in inviting such to hold communion with their fellow professors in an ordinance instituted by Jesus Christ. It is true I am a Presbyterian by the exercise of my judgment, but that judgment informs me that other denominations of christians, are interested in the purchase of the redeemer as well as mine. The word of God steps forward and confirms the rectitude of my determination by telling me that the heavenly multitude which surrounds the throne is gathered from all nations, kindreds, people and tongues.

Can I be to blame then, when I hold communion here on earth with those, who, though not exactly of my opinion, in religion, will certainly have places assigned them in heaven at a table that shall never be drawn? O my friend expand your intellectual powers. Believe, if prejudice and narrowness will let you, that the grace of God hath appeared unto all men of every class, condition and denomination and that if they deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and live soberly, righteously and godly in this world they will live in supreme happiness with God forever.

Your last letter informs me, since I have undertaken to write against you what is to be my future fate. My name is to be hung up in the gibbets of my own sophistry, and I am to be the scare-crow in the
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hands of mothers with which they are to still their fretful sucklings ! This, sir, is worthy of the highest ridicule and contempt. Which of us do you suppose stands the fairest, to be the scare-crow to infants? You who allow them no gospel privilege whatever, or I who contend that they have a right to baptism the seal of the covenant of grace ; according to scripture ? Surely of the two you must be to them much the most frightful object.

Before I conclude this communication, I think proper to observe, that though I have ventured to think for myself through the whole of this performance ; yet I have derived great assistance from many writers on the subject of baptism, particularly, from Witsius, Bostwick, Turretine and Waldelen, some of whose language, and many of whose sentiments I have adopted and incorporated with my own ; which by the bye is another strong argument in favour of the practice for which I contend. For surely if these men, learned in the original languages, some of them professors of theology in the best and most approved Universities upon earth, held such sentiments concerning the scripturality of infant baptism, you, sir, not at all to disparage you, should think more, study longer, and judge with much more caution before you condemn them as divines whose works are to perish with themselves. My next address to you, if you answer this shall bear the title of, " More work for the Reverend Adam Freeman."

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH.

N. B. The author did expect this pamphlet would contain one hundred pages ; but as the subject seems to be exhausted, he wishes to avoid idle words.