

FAIR and RATIONAL
VINDICATION,
Of the Right of Infants, to the Ordinance of
BAPTISM:

Being the Substance of several Discourses from
ACTS II, 39.

CONTAINING:

- I. The Scripture Ground, on which the Right of Infants to Baptism is founded.
- II. The Evidence by which it is supported.
- III. A Solution of the most material Objections.

By *DAVID BOSTWICK, A. M.*

Late Minister of the *Presbyterian Church*, in the City of *New-York*.

*That the Blessing of ABRAHAM might come on the
Gentiles, thro' JESUS CHRIST. ST. PAUL.*

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¶ The Reader is desired to insert in the 6th Line from the Bottom of the 32d Page, immediately after the Word Pollution, the Words following, viz. And if they are capable of deriving original Guilt and Pollution



P R E F A C E.

THE *Reverend* and *pious Author* of the following Treatise, compos'd it for the *Pulpit*, and deliver'd it in sundry *Sermons*, but a few Weeks before his decease: Which being found to have a very happy Effect, in the Confirmation and Establishment of some wavering Minds among his own People, he was urg'd to transcribe his Notes for the Press; but soon after he had begun this Work, he was (as to the particular Time of it) unexpectedly call'd, to his superior Station in *God's Temple above*. Yet by a *kind Providence*, a few Days before his last Illness, a *young Minister*, in the Neighbourhood of this City, who had a Desire to improve himself by Mr. *Bostwick's* Notes, which were written in a Kind of short-Hand of his own Invention, applied to him, and at his Request Mr. *Bostwick* spent several Hours in teaching him in some Degree to understand them; and by *his Means*, the Copy now printed, was recovered from Oblivion, and transcribed since Mr. *Bostwick's* Death.

Under this View, 'tis hop'd, the candid Reader will dispense with a Stile a little too diffuse for a printed Argumentation, and pardon any Inaccuracy, that would probably have been avoided, if the Work had pass'd under it's *Author's last Hand*.

Those that were acquainted with Mr. *Bostwick's* mild and pacific Temper, and knew the general Course of his Ministry to have been only conversant about the great *Doctrines* and *Duties* of *Christianity*, may wonder that a *controverted Point* should have employed his *Meditations*, just before he enter'd into his *Master's Joy*. Especially when he appear'd to his *Hearers* in his publick Discourses for several Months before his Departure, to have been under an *uncommon Impress* of the great *Truths* which have a more immediate Reference to the *World* to come! *The glorious and dreadful Realities* whereof (which were frequently his own Expressions concerning them) visibly lying with the greatest Weight upon his Spirits.

But the Truth is, that *this excellent Servant of Christ*, thought the Subject of this Treatise of *high concernment* in *Religion*; and the *Believer's Right* to the Blessings of the *Covenant of Grace*, and their *Infant Children's Right* to the *Seal* of that *Covenant*, to be so important a Point in *Christianity*, that it well deserv'd his Attention; especially when the State of his own Flock, from very obvious Causes apparent to himself and many others, rendered it absolutely Necessary. And it is still presumed, that the most of the Readers of these Sheets will think a *Publication* on such a Subject, in these Days, and in such a Place as *New-York*, needs no *Apology*. And 'tis hop'd the Author's Manner of handling it, though it appears in Publick under all the Disadvantages of a *posthumous Work*, will reflect no *Dishonour* on his Memory.

Perhaps this may be all that may be thought necessary to introduce this short Tract to the publick View,
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by way of Preface. But tho' Mr. *Bostwick's* superior Talents for the Work of the Ministry had *spread his Praises in the Gospel, througout these Western Churches,* yet he was personally known (comparatively) but to *few*. His *fix'd Charge*, having always confin'd him within the Verge of his incumbent Duty, and his great *Humility* and intire Freedom from all Ostentation, ever conceal'd him as much from publick View, as the Eminency of his Station would permit. But *as HE IS NOW NO MORE,* and some *STRICTURES* of his *Person* and *Character*, may be agreeable to many of the distant *Readers* of this Treatise, they may be pleas'd to take them briefly thus,

As A MAN ; he was something above middle *Stature*, *comely* and *well set*, his Aspect *Grave* and *venerable* ; form'd by Nature, with a clear *Understanding*, quick *Apprehension*, prompt *Elocution*, and solid *Judgment* ; his *Imagination* strong and lively, and his *Memory* very tenacious. Of all these he gave the most convincing *Proofs*, both in public and private Life.

He directed the Course of his *Studies*, in a close and intimate Subserviency to the great *Business* of his *PROFESSION*. EN TOUTOIS ISTHI (1 TIM. iv, 15) *might have been his MOTTO*. In *DIVINITY* his great Strength lay. He had an admirable discerning of *Truth* and *Error* in their Causes, Connections and Consequences ; and believ'd and taught the pure *Doctrines* of *Christianity* as contained in the holy *Scriptures*, and as declar'd in the publick *Confessions* of the reformed Churches, in their original and genuine Meaning. He beheld his *BIBLE* with *Reverence*, as the *GRAND CHARTER* of *Life Eternal* ! He knew it to be a
Revelation

Revelation from God, and the most wonderful *Book* in the *World*! He saw it's external and internal Evidence, by Nature's Light, aided by human Learning; and by a special Illumination from above. He beheld the *Majesty, Glory, Reality, and Importance* of the *Subject* of it; discerning therein, an admirable *Display* of the infinite Perfections of the DEITY, with a perfect Accommodation to the various States of *Man*. He considered it not only as a SYSTEM of *Divine Knowledge*, but as revealing a practical and experimental *Discipline*; and felt it's *vital Energy*, and had it's *Truth* sealed on his *Heart*, with that Kind of Evidence as would doubtless have stood the Fire upon the severest Trial.

AFTER THIS, I scarce need add, that he was a DIVINE OF THE OLD STAMP, and could well defend his *System* against all *Gainfayers*. In these Things he was a Scribe well instructed,---and with great *Sagacity* and *Penetration* could discern the *Spirit of Error* in it's most distant Approaches. He knew it's *Connections*, and *Tendencies* (ever aiming at God's Dishonour or *Man's* Ruin) and therefore as a faithful *Watchman* always gave the speediest Warning of the *Danger*.

He had those Gifts which rendered him a very popular PREACHER: With a strong commanding *Voice*, his *Pronunciation* was clear, distinct and deliberate; His *Speech* and *Gesture* decent and natural, without any Affectation; His *Language* elegant and pure, but with studied Plainness, never below the Dignity of the Pulpit, nor above the Capacity of the meanest of his Auditory. The Strength of his *Memory*, and the Flow of his *Elocution*, enabled him to preach without Notes, but seldom or never extempore: He furnish'd the
Lamps

Lamps of the Sanctuary with beaten Oil, and the Matter and Method of his Sermons were well studied.

In treating *Divine Subjects*, he manifested an *habitual Reverence* for the MAJESTY OF HEAVEN, a deep Sense of the *Worth of Souls*, an intimate *Knowledge* of the *human Heart*, and it's various *Workings* in it's two-fold State of *Nature* and *Grace*. He dealt faithfully with his *Hearers*, *declaring to them the whole Council of God*, shewing them their *Danger* and *Remedy*. And none will *perish* from under his *Ministry*, but their *Blood* must lie *upon their own Heads*. He always spake from a *deep Sense* of the *Truths* he delivered, and declared those *Things*, *which he had seen and which he had heard*, and *his Hands had banded of the Word of Life*; and delivered nothing to his *Auditory*, but with a *Solemnity* that discovered it's *IMPORTANCE*.

His *Mind* had a *Poetick Turn*. His *Stile* was copious and florid. He sometimes soar'd, when his Subject would admit of it, with an elevated *Wing*; and his *Imagination* enabled him to paint his *SCENE*, *whatever it was*, in very strong and lively *Colours*. Few Men could describe the *hideous Deformity* of Sin, the *Misery* of Men's *Apostacy* from GOD, the *Wonders* of *redeeming Love*, the *Glory* and *Riches* of *Divine Grace*, in stronger *Lines*, and more affecting *Strains* than he.

In the *Conduct* of *Life*, he was remarkably *gentle towards all Men*, vastly *prudent* and *cautious*, and always behaved *with the Meekness of Wisdom*, and fill'd up every *Relation* in *Life*, with it's proper *Duty*, and was a living *Example* of the *Truth* of that Religion, which he taught to others. He *preached not himself, but Christ Jesus his Lord*. In this *View* his *Eye* was *single*,
and

and he regarded no other *Object*. He knew in *whose* Place he stood, and fear'd no *Man*. He dar'd to flash the *Terrors* of the *Law* in the Face of the stoutest *Transgressor*, with the same *Freedom* as he display'd the amiable *Beauties* and *Glories* of the *Gospel*, for the *Comfort* and *Refreshment* of the penitent *Believer*.

As he highly honoured his *Divine Master*, he was highly favour'd by *him*, of which take one Instance,

In a former *Illness*, from which it was thought he could not recover, which happen'd some *Months* before he died, he was greatly distress'd by a *deep Concern* for his *Widow* and his *great Family*, on the Event of his Death. But God was pleas'd in a Time of great *Extremity*, to grant him a *Glorious* and *astonishing View* of his *Power*, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, and the *Riches of his Grace*, with a particular *Appropriation* to *Himself* and *his*. Such as dispell'd every *Fear*, and at that Time, rendered him impatient to live, but at length on his Recovery, which commenc'd immediately on the Removal of this Distress, his *Mind* settled into a *Divine Calm*; He perceiv'd himself equally willing to *live* or *die* as God pleas'd. In which *Temper* he continued to his last *Moment*, when *placidly* he resign'd his *Soul* and all his *Mortal Interests*, into the Hands of HIS SAVIOUR and HIS GOD! Such Intercourse sometimes pass'es between the Father of Spirits and the human Spirit, and such Honour have they that fear God!

Thus liv'd, and thus died, in the midst of his Days and Usefulness, *this excellent Minister of Jesus Christ*, to the unspeakable Loss of the *World*, the *Church*, and his *Family*. He departed this *Life* on the 12th Day of *November*, in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty Three, and in the *Forty fourth* Year of his *Age*, leaving his *Widow* and *Ten Children* to the Care of *Providence*, and his Remains lie buried in the Front Isle of the Presbyterian Church in this City.

Dated at New-York April the Ninth, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty Four.

A FAIR



A

FAIR and RATIONAL
VINDICATION, &c.

ACTS ²~~2~~ 39th.

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.

YOU are very sensible, my brethren, that it has not been my usual practice to entertain you with litigious disputes, or to introduce matters of needless controversy into the sacred desk; much less to throw out occasional reflections, or fix opprobrious epithets on those of different denominations.—This, I ever esteemed a mean, unmanly way of opposing error, or advancing the cause of truth.—I have rather in general considered my hearers, as transient, itinerant mortals, bound to an eternal world; and therefore have made it my principal business, to inculcate upon them, those plain, practical, and important truths, that have the nearest connection with, and are of the greatest consequence to, their eternal interest.

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Convinced

Convinced, however, of my indispensable duty, by several concurring circumstances; I shall now attempt to illustrate, what I suppose a precious gospel truth; and vindicate a valuable privilege, of which the church of Christ has been in possession from its first institution, tho' by some made a matter of dispute; and that is, *the right of infant children, descending from confederate, or covenanted parents, to that ordinance of baptism, which is the external seal of the gospel covenant.* — And as this is known to be my principle, from my constant practice; surely none can take it amiss, or think it strange, that I stand forth in its vindication; especially as I design no unchristian reflections, no acrimonious expressions, or uncharitable censures, on those of contrary sentiments and practice; but only a fair and rational vindication of my own; having principally in view, the satisfaction of a number of my hearers, who have express'd their desire of being further instructed in the scriptural grounds and reasons, of our constant practice. — And tho' on the one hand, I will not place this point, of infant baptism, among the things that are absolutely essential to salvation; yet on the other, I am far from supposing it to be a matter of trifling indifference, or of little, or no consequence. — For if the baptism of infants is not agreeable to divine institution, or warranted by the sacred word; then not only we, but the Protestant churches in general, must be in a very unhappy situation — having no regular gospel ordinances of any kind whatsoever. — Nay, if infant baptism be a meer nullity, as some pretend, then we, with the generality of the Protestant churches, are in fact, a company of unbaptised Heathens; who have neither churches, ministers, or ordinances, according to the institution of Jesus Christ: Our ministers themselves, being unbaptised, can have no regular authority to baptise others; and we being all unbaptised, cannot without the greatest impropriety approach the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

Having therefore, on this supposition, no regular ordinances among us; we with our numerous Protestant brethren, of various denominations, must want the very essence of a regular
gospel

gospel church, and in this respect be reduced to a state of absolute heathenism.---I do not adduce this, as a proof, that infant baptism is a divine institution; that, I trust, will be proved by more direct and positive evidences; I only mention it to shew that the controversy is no trifle, but of sufficient importance to demand our attention, and engage our impartial inquiry, whether we are right, or whether we are wrong? And can our opponents, whose principles and conduct necessarily unchurch the whole protestant world, except themselves,---can they, I say, think themselves offended, that we don't silently submit to their uncharitable censures? will they be displeased, that we assert and vindicate our standing in the visible kingdom of Christ, and that we are a gospel church as well as they? Sure, those that are men of conscience among them will not; or if they should, yet these are matters too interesting to be given up, out of meer complaisance, to any society of men in the universe.---Let us then aim at the truth, without any regard to the pleasure or displeasure of mortals; and if our infant baptism can be vindicated, for conscience sake let it be done.---If not, if the truth is not for us, but against us, let us honestly give it up, and no more practise what the sacred word will not defend.

Having thus hinted the importance of the controversy, as a sufficient warrant for my present attempt; I shall now consider the occasion, and the proper meaning, of the words before us, --*for the promise is to you and to your children, &c.*

In the preceding 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 inquiry, *men and brethren, what shall we do?*

We have also the Apostle's answer to this momentous and interesting inquiry, *Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. i. e.* "Return unfeignedly from sin to God, thro' Jesus Christ; submit to the grace and government

government of this divine Redeemer; and make a solemn, publick profession of this submission, by being baptised 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 Ghost."

This exhortation plainly consists of two branches, each of which is urged with a distinct motive. The first is *repentance*, or a turning to God thro' Jesus Christ. This is urged with the encouraging motive, that they shall receive the forgiveness of sins, and the ordinary 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 baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. This is urged with the motive in the text, *for the promise is unto you and to your children, &c. q. d.* "The promise which encourages you to enter into this new covenant, by baptism, is *primarily* to you, and your children, as the descendants of Abraham; and *secondarily* to *as many* of the Gentiles, who are yet *afar off*, (and, including their children also) as by the ministry of the word, *the Lord our God shall call.*" 'Tis plain then, that this promise, whatever is intended by it, is urged as a reason why they ought to submit to this new institution of the gospel, and *be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus*. This reason then must hold good with respect to *all* to whom the promise is made; but the promise is made equally to *them*, and their *children*; it is therefore an equal reason why *they*, and *their children* should be baptised.--- i. e. If the promise being made to them was any reason why they ought to be baptised, 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; nor can I possibly see how the Apostle's argument can have any more force with respect to the parents, than it has with respect to the children. --The sum of the argument is plainly this: The promise is to you, therefore be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ.—But the promise is to your children also; therefore let your children be baptised would seem a
necessary

necessary consequence.---And indeed to suppose their children excluded from baptism, must render the Apostle's argument very confused and inconclusive; for then it must stand thus. *The promise is to you, therefore be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus; the same promise is equally to your children---* yet let not your children be baptised; for they are not the proper subjects of such an ordinance.---And what an absurdity is this? How easily might the Jews object and say,---if the promise to our children is no reason why they should be baptised, then neither is the promise to us any ground or reason why we should submit to this new institution, and therefore to say the least, there is just nothing at all in the argument

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 the covenanted parents, and that the promise of Abraham's covenant had always run in that tenor, including parents and children.---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 possession of their ancient privilege; for that very promise, which included them under the law, equally includes them now 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, that their children were like to be in a worse condition under the gospel, than they were under the law; which must greatly strengthen 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 the privileges of the gospel should by no means be more confined and limited, than those of the law; but on the contrary more enlarged: For under the law the promise was only to them and their children, as descendants of Abraham; but now it shall extend to all among the Gentiles, and their children also, *whom the Lord our God shall call.*

All that is further necessary to make this text an unanswerable argument for the right of infants to baptism, is only to prove these two points.

1. That by the *promise* here, must be understood the covenant promise made to Abraham, which gave his infant children a right to the ordinance of circumcision.

2. That the word *children* in the text does not intend their adult descendants, as some pretend, but their infant offspring.

If these two things are proved, the argument stands thus. The covenant promise made to Abraham, which gave his infant children a right to circumcision under the law, is now to you and your infant children under the gospel.---And this promise being urged as a reason why the parents should be baptised, must necessarily carry an equal reason for the baptism of their children; and must be so understood both by the Apostle and his Jewish hearers.

The first question then is, whether by the *promise*, in the text, the Apostle means that covenant promise made to Abraham, which entitled his infant children to circumcision? This some deny, and suppose that by this promise the Apostle only intends that of Joel's prophecy, which he had quoted in the preceding sermon, from the 16th to the 22d verse; but let any one read that prophecy of Joel, as quoted by the Apostle, in those verses, and he must be immediately convinced, that the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost are there intended;-- consequently that the promise, contained in this prophecy, could never *here* be urged, as a ground or motive to baptism;-- for extraordinary and miraculous gifts, were neither required, as the ground of baptism, or numbered among the blessings that usually attend or flow from it. Nor is there the least intimation, given in this history, that the 3000 here baptised, did receive these miraculous gifts.---If therefore *this* was the promise he speaks of to them and their children, it will follow that the promise was not made good; for neither they nor their children, (that we read of) were ever possess'd of these extraordinary gifts. Besides, the promise in Joel had
already

already its accomplishment, in that extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles.--- This St. Peter declares, and quotes the promise on purpose to prove his declaration. 'Tis plain then, he can have no reference to this, in the *promise* here mentioned; nor can it with the least propriety, be understood of any thing else but that very PROMISE which God made to Abraham, when he took him, and his infant children, into covenant.--- This covenant was so eminent, and so well known, that it was often emphatically called THE PROMISE, without any other characteristic or note of distinction.--- Thus the spiritual seed of Abraham are said to be heirs according to THE PROMISE. And in many other places too numerous to mention.--- But to conclude this point, the Apostle himself has plainly informed us, in another place, what he here intends by the promise, see *Acts* iii, 25. where urging much the same exhortation upon his Jewish hearers, as he does here, he enforces it with this argument. *Ye are the children of the covenant, which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed;---unto you first God hath raised up his son Jesus, and sent him to bless you, &c.* And as the *promise* is here propounded, as a motive and obligation to baptism; nothing could be more natural than for the Jews to understand it of the promise of Abraham's covenant, on which was grounded the ordinance of circumcision.

Allowing then (for indeed it cannot with any consistency be disputed) that the promise of Abraham's covenant is the thing to which the Apostle refers.--- The second question is, *who* are intended by *their children*, to whom this promise is laid to belong? Some suppose their adult descendants, and not their infant offspring, are the children here intended; but of this there is not the least intimation in the text, nor does it at all agree with the scope of the Apostle's argument; nay, such a construction would seem to make him speak nonsense; for then he must be understood thus, "The promise is unto you and to your children, but not to them as your children, or as sustaining any relation to you; but when they shall advance to an adult age,
and

and be called by the ministry of the word ; then the promise shall be to *them* as well as to you." --- Which is no more than might be said of the children of an Ethiopian : Why then is their relation to their parents mentioned at all, and why are they joined with them, as the subjects of the promise, if after all, they are to stand on their own footing, as adults, as much as the children of the Heathen ? Nor does this construction consist with the plain grammatical sense of the words ; for he does not say the promise is now to you, and shall be to your children when grown and called by the word ; but the promise is now to you and to your children : By which he very plainly intends the present privilege the Jewish children enjoy, above the present uncovenanted Gentiles, who are here said to be afar off, and to whom he says the promise shall belong when called into a church state, and to their children also. —

Having thus proved, that by the PROMISE here, the Apostle means the covenant made with Abraham ; and by CHILDREN, their *infant* offspring ; the conclusion is plain, that if the promise is proposed, as a reason, why the parents should be baptised, as the text plainly asserts ; it is then an equal reason, why baptism should be administer'd to their children ; for the promise is equally to *both*.

Having thus explained the text, I shall endeavour to illustrate and establish this proposition,

That the infant children of confederate, or covenanted parents, have a right to the seal of the covenant, under the gospel, as much as they had under the law, and therefore ought to be baptised. To set this in a proper light, I shall attempt to shew,

1. The scripture ground, on which the right of infants to baptism, is founded.

2. The evidence we have, both from scripture and history, that the baptism of infants was the common practice, both of the Apostles and the primitive church. --- And

III. I shall attempt a solution of the most material, and common objections, raised against the doctrine.

I. then. The ground on which the right of infants to baptism is founded, is---the covenant that God made with Abraham and his seed,---the institution of circumcision as a seal of that covenant,---and the administration of that seal, by God's appointment to his infant children,---whence this conclusion is natural, (viz.) that the infant child of covenanted parents had, by God's appointment, a right to the external seal of the covenant under the law; and therefore, as the same covenant continues, they have, doubtless the same right, under the gospel.

To bring out this conclusion, *that they have the same right under the gospel*, I shall endeavour to prove these three things.

i. *That the covenant made with Abraham was a covenant of grace, and the same for substance that is now in force under the gospel.*

ii. *That circumcision was the external seal of this covenant, and was by God's appointment administered to infant children.*

iii. *That baptism is now a seal of the same covenant, instituted in the room of circumcision, and therefore ought to be administered to the same subjects, viz. to the infant children of covenanted parents.*

i. *The covenant made with Abraham was a covenant of grace, and the same for substance that is now in force under the gospel*—This I look upon to be the grand turning point, on which the issue of the controversy very much depends; for if Abraham's covenant, which included his infant children, and gave them a right to circumcision, was not the covenant of grace, then I freely confess that the main ground on which we assert the right of infants to baptism is taken away; and consequently the principal arguments, in support of the doctrine are 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 believer's children, and consequently their right to the seal of the covenant, under the gospel, as well as under the law, is indisputable.

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And that Abraham's covenant was the same covenant of grace, that now subsists under the gospel, I shall prove from the following arguments.---

1. The nature of the covenant *itself*, and the tenor of the *promise* it contains, are the same with the covenant of grace, see 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 TO THEE AND THY SEED AFTER THEE.* Now this is the constant stile of the covenant of Grace. *I WILL BE A GOD TO THEE, &c.* God never was, or ever will be a God to any man, since the fall, in the sense of that phrase, but thro' Christ, and by a covenant of grace. Hence the Apostle mentions this, as the express tenor of the covenant of grace, and the grand sum of all the promises it contains, see HEB. viii, 10. *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.* A greater good than this cannot be promised; for it is the sum of eternal life. Hence it is said, REV. xxi, 7. *He, that overcometh, shall inherit all things, and I WILL BE HIS GOD.* As therefore Abraham's covenant promised the greatest blessing that can be promised, even the very same, in express words, as is promised in the covenant of grace, sure it must be the same covenant, or else there must be two covenants, promising the same thing, and in the same words, which is absurd.

2. The apostle testifies, that believers under the gospel are the spiritual seed of Abraham, and consequently 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 which believers are under *now*, and will be to the end of the world, see GAL. iii. 29. *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* What promise? why the promise of Abraham's covenant; *that he would be a God to him, and his seed after him.* 'Tis plain then that the covenant that promiseth 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 made with Abraham, *was confirmed of God in Christ*, GAL. iii, 17. but 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.

4. We are abundantly assured, that Abraham was justified by faith, as all believers are under the gospel, ROM. iv, 3, and 23.—But no covenant in the universe ever did, or can admit of justification by faith, except the covenant of grace;—therefore as all believers have communion with Abraham, in this grand covenant privilege of justification, and are justified on the same terms with *him*; it certainly must follow, that if believers are *now* under the covenant of grace, so was Abraham also.—Let me add to this, that the scripture assures us, in plain terms, that *the gospel was preached unto 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 admit of no further dispute. ——— From the whole I think I may now fairly draw this conclusion; that the covenant made with Abraham, including his infant children, was the same for substance, with that which is now in force with believers under the gospel, and differed only in the external mode of administration: For (1) 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*: (2) The term, or condition, of the covenant is the *same*; for in both, justification is by faith, without works: (3) The mediator of the covenant is the *same*,—*Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, to day, and forever*: (4) The sacraments under each administration, (tho' consisting 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,*
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with believers, under the gospel, *for they drank of the rock, that followed them, and that rock was Christ.*

Thus I think it appears, beyond contradiction, that the covenant, made with Abraham, and his seed, was the covenant of grace; and the *same* of which the spiritual seed of Abraham are heirs, under the gospel.—And it is no objection to the above-mentioned conclusion, that the promise of the land of Canaan was included in that covenant; for temporal blessings, are included in the covenant of grace. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the PROMISE of the life, that now is, as well as of that, which is to come.*

ii. *Circumcision was a seal of this covenant of grace, and was, by God's appointment, administered to infant children.* That it was the token, or seal, of Abraham's covenant, you see in the very institution; GEN. xvii, 11. *Ye shall be circumcised, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.* And again, *this is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, every man child among you shall be circumcised.*—And the Apostle tells us expressly; ROM. iii, 11. *That Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith:* And that the promise of his covenant was not to Abraham, and his seed, through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith (i. e.) the covenant of grace; for what has faith to do with a legal covenant of works? And that this seal of the covenant was, by God's appointment, administered to the infant children of Abraham's posterity, in all their succeeding generations, will not be denied by any, who have read the history of the Old Testament.

Now from these two propositions, that the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace, and that circumcision was the seal of that covenant, and administered to infant children, by God's appointment; it follows, as plain as any consequence can follow, that the children of confederate parents, were once included, together with their parents, in the covenant of grace.

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That this was the case of Abraham's children has been undeniably prov'd, and that this was the case of the Israelites, under the Mosaick dispensation, is evident from the express word, DEUTERONOMY, xxix, 10th, and onward; where we have a renewal of the *same* covenant.

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 thy camp; from the bever of thy wood, unto the drawer of thy water; that thou shouldst 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 to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be to thee a God, &c. Observe how their LITTLE ONES are partakers in this solemn transaction. He then who denies, that children were taken into this covenant, may as well deny this to be the word of God. Nay, it is evident from the constant practice of circumcising infants, that they were *always* considered, as included with the confederate parents; and on this footing, *that seal* of the covenant was administered. Since then the children of confederate parents were, by God himself, admitted into covenant, they must still be acknowledg'd by God as parties in the new covenant, or *rather* new administration of the covenant; and ought to be *so* acknowledg'd by us; unless there is good ground for their exclusion: For a privilege, once granted to the church, must continue through all ages, unless the donor is pleased to revoke it; and that the covenant interest of children is a privilege, the Apostle plainly proves, in his answer to the question, *what advantage hath the Jew, and what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way.*—David acknowledg'd it a privilege, and pleaded it before God.—*I am thy servant, and the son of thy hand maid*, Psa. cxvi, 16. Now if this be a privilege, and God has *once* granted it to his church; when has he ever revoked it? It is certain he did receive children into his church, with their parents, and granted them the seal; this is undeniable fact.—Now, has he given the
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least intimation, that it was his design ever to exclude them? There is not a single text in the Bible, that teaches either *expressly* or by *consequence*, that they ought to be cut off from that *antient* privilege. Neither has Jesus Christ, by any doctrine, or institution, debar'd them from their covenant interest, but rather confirmed it, as I shall shew in the sequel.

There is nothing in the nature, or constitution, of the gospel covenant, that excludes them; nor can any reason be suggested for it, from their incapacity: for they are as capable now of blessings, and of the seal of the covenant, as they were under the law. Therefore, since it is undeniable, that God has of old received infants into covenant, and has never since, either directly, or consequentially, debar'd, or cut them off from this privilege; and since no reason can be assigned, why they ought to be excluded; I must, I am constrained, to believe, that it is still his will, that they should be reckon'd as parties in his covenant, and intitled to the external seal.

iii. I now proceed to the third thing that was proposed under the first general head, (*viz.*) *That baptism is a seal of the same covenant, made with Abraham, instituted in the room of circumcision, and therefore ought to be administered to the children of profess'd believers.*

1st. If the covenant, made with Abraham, was a covenant of grace, and an everlasting covenant, as has been proved, then baptism must be a seal of the *same* covenant, & must have been instituted in the room of circumcision, just as the Lord's supper is instituted in the room of the ancient passover; and this the Apostle 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 to observe, that the Colossians were perplexed with Judaizing teachers, urging the necessity of circumcision. The Apostle tells them they need it not; but are complete in Christ without that Jewish rite, since they had been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus; which he calls the circumcision of Christ, or, as it might be rendered,
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the Christian circumcision, which exactly answers the spiritual use and design of that Jewish institution. What then can be meant by the circumcision of Christ, but baptism? It can't be the circumcision that Christ received when an infant; for that was the Jewish rite the Apostle was arguing against. It can't be the spiritual circumcision of the heart; for this is mentioned in the foregoing clause, and called a 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 have been nonsense. But the Apostle has put it out of all 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. But,

2dly. Baptism signifies the same thing with circumcision, and may we not therefore conclude that baptism was instituted in its room? Did the blood of circumcision point to the blood of Jesus Christ, as that whereby guilt is removed? so does the water of baptism. Did circumcision signify our natural corruption, and our need of regeneration, and sanctification by the spirit? so does baptism. Was circumcision the sacrament of admission into that church of Israel? so is baptism into the Christian church. Was circumcision a badge of relation to the God of Israel? so is baptism of relation to Christ. And was circumcision a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and of the righteousness of faith? so is baptism. The analogy in *these*, and in many other particulars, that might be mention'd, plainly shews, that baptism was instituted in the room of circumcision.

Again 3dly. If baptism does not come in the room of circumcision, then we have no ordinance answering to that Jewish rite, and consequently the Christian church, by the coming of Christ, has been deprived of a sacrament, which was reckon'd of singular advantage in the Jewish dispensation; for the

the *profit of circumcision*, the Apostle asserts, *was much every way*. And if so, the Christian church has lost much every way, by having nothing appointed in its stead. We find that other institutions, under the old testament are supplied by something answerable in the new. Instead of the passover, we have the Lord's supper. Instead of the Jewish priests, gospel ministers. Instead of the meeting of the tribes at the temple, our Christian assemblies. Instead of the seventh day sabbath, we have the first day of the week. And does nothing succeed circumcision? Is a divine ordinance totally lost? Surely such a supposition is absurd.—And if any thing does succeed circumcision, baptism certainly stands the fairest for its successor, as it has the same use and meaning, and is a sign of the same covenant.

Now if baptism succeeds circumcision, as a seal 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 confederate parents.

Could that circumcision of Christ, which the Apostle calls baptism, satisfy his Jewish hearers, if it was not to extend to their children, as well as the circumcision of Abraham? They were enrag'd at Paul, we are told, when they heard, that 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 antient rite, would have been no satisfaction to them, had it been only for adults, and not for their infant children. The Apostle therefore must have intended it for both, or else he had given no satisfactory answer to the plea of the Jews for retaining circumcision.

Thus I have shewn, that the covenant with Abraham, was a covenant of Grace—that circumcision was a seal of that covenant, and by God's appointment administered to his infant children,—that baptism is a seal of the *same* covenant, and therefore ought to be administered to the *same* subjects, i. e. the

the infant children of confœderate, and believing parents; because their ancient right to this seal has never been disannull'd.

II. I now proceed to shew, the evidences we have, both from scripture, and history, that the baptism of infants, was the common practice, both of the Apostles, and the primitive churches. Now the evidence we have, that this was the practice of the Apostles, is of two kinds.

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

2. The strong probability we have, that there were infant children among those, whom they baptized.

1st. Then it is indisputably evident, that the Apostles did allow the covenant interest of children, under the gospel, as well as under the law. I have already shewn, that the text itself plainly asserts, that the promise of Abraham's covenant was to believers, and their infant children; and to this, I would add that passage Rom. xi. 16. *For if the root be holy, so are the branches, and if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in amongst them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, &c.* Now by the root *here*, the Apostle intends *Abraham*, and by the branches his posterity, who partook in the same privileges with him, by virtue of their interest in the same covenant, till they were broken off. Here then is plainly asserted the fœderal holiness, or covenant interest of the children of confœderate parents. If the root be holy, so are the branches. God has said it, and who dare unsay it? And as this is not spoken of real holiness or truly gracious habits, (for no parent can convey real holiness to his children) it must then mean a fœderal, or covenant holiness, such as denominated the Jews in general, a holy nation; not that they were all truly gracious, but visibly dedicated to God, and members of his visible church; and in consequence of this, had his ordinances admittred to them. This is the holiness we plead, for the children of believers, or confœderate parents. Now it is here asserted, that the believing Gentiles, are so ingrafted into this stock, and so united to

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Abraham, by covenant relation, as to partake of the same privileges that Abraham's children once did, and from which they were now broken off. For observe, the *grafted in*, answers exactly to the *broken off*. The *broken off*, of the Jews, was from the visible church, so is the *grafted in*, of the Gentiles.

The *broken off*, reach'd parents and children, and so must the *grafted in*. And if the believing Gentiles partook of the fatness of the *same* olive, i. e. of the *same* privileges of which the Jews did, then their children certainly must be included in the covenant, and entitled to the external seal; for that the Jewish children *were* is plain fact; and if Gentile children are excluded, and not taken into covenant, by baptism, as the others were by circumcision, then they do not partake of the *same* privileges with the Jews, who are broken off, and consequently the Apostle's assertion must be false, and his argument inconclusive.

Another text which proves the covenant interest of the infants of believing parents, in the judgment of the Apostle, is 1 Cor. vii, 14. *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.* The question proposed was this; *whether it was lawful for a believing husband or wife, to live with their unbelieving companion?* This the Apostle answers in the affirmative, for which he gives this reason, the unbeliever is sanctified by the believer, whose duty it is to consecrate his all to God, as he actually does, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. This is a plain intimation, that it would not be consistent with the Christian character, to continue in a marriage-relation with an infidel, if their children would, in such case, be unclean. Here *unclean*, and *holy*, are set in direct opposition. Now to be unclean in the stile of scripture, as opposed to holy, is to be out of the visible church, or without any visible interest in, or covenant-relation to God, see Acts x, 14. where Peter uses the word unclean with reference to Cornelius, because he was not visibly in covenant, being a Gentile. And on the
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other hand, to be holy, must signify to have a visible interest in the covenant, or visibly to belong to God. So that the covenant relation of the children, of believing parents is here plainly asserted: What else can be meant by their being holy? It cannot mean legitimacy, as some pretend; for the legitimacy of children has no dependance on the relative character, or profession of their parents, but only on a lawful marriage; which is no peculiar privilege of the church, but of mankind in general. It cannot mean a real internal holiness; for this is not at all derived from the most eminent believing parents. But it is plain, the Apostle here means some kind of holiness, that depends on one of the parent's being a believer, and without which they would be unclean. If this then is not a fœderal holiness, or a visible covenant relation, let any man, if he can, tell what it is. If it is a fœderal holiness, or covenant relation, then here is a plain proof, that the Apostle look'd upon the children of confœderate parents, as having the same interest in the covenant, under the gospel, as they had under the law; and if they had the same interest in the covenant, they had the same right to the external seal: For a right to baptism is acknowledged, by all, to be founded on a visible interest in the covenant of grace. This gave Abraham and his children a right to circumcision under the law; and this it is that gives both parents and children a right to baptism under the gospel. Now if the Apostle look'd on the children of believing parents, as having an interest in the covenant of grace, as has been proved, and if they esteemed a visible covenant interest to be the ground of admission to baptism, which none will deny, then we have undeniable evidence, that they did in fact baptize the children of all professing believers; & that they understood their commission, as authorizing them so to do, when they were bid to go, *and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* The word *teach* is, in the original, to make disciples, or learn; and children are capable in this sense of being made disciples; nay, the children of believing parents, under the gospel, are called disciples expressly,

expressly, Acts xv, 10. *Now therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, &c.*

The yoke here mentioned was circumcision, which was appointed to be administered to infant children, as you see in the context ; therefore children are called disciples, and as they are capable of being admitted, as learners, in the school of Christ, and have that interest in the covenant, on which that right of baptism is founded ; they must be included in the words *all nations*, mentioned in the commission. And, besides this clear evidence, that they understood their commission to include believers' infants, we have also, from scripture accounts, the highest probability that their general practice was accordingly : for we read that they baptized whole households. For instance, Lydia, and her household—the jailor, and all that were *his*, and the household of Stephanus. And is it probable that there were no infant children in any of these families ? We read, when God smote the first-born of Egypt, there was not an house, in which there was not *one* dead ; consequently not an house in Egypt, in which there was not a child.—And is it probable, or credible, to an unprejudiced mind, that in all the households baptized, there was not *one* child ? Suppose it had been said of one profelyted to the Jewish religion, that he, and his household, or that he, and all his, were circumcised ; would any doubt whether his infant children were circumcised ? I believe not : for this was a known practice, ever since Abraham's covenant, to receive the children with the parents into a covenant relation. And I have shown that the same reasons hold for their admission under the gospel. It would seem then, as it had always been the practice of the church, to administer the seal of the covenant to the infants of confederate parents) that there would have been some disapprobation of it, or some express declaration against it, if it is not to be continued. So great a change as that of casting infants out of the visible church, who had been admitted for so many hundred years, by a divine appointment, can hardly be supposed, without an express declaration forbidding them.

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Would the Apostles have refused them *that* Christian membership, and the seal of the covenant, which they had so long enjoy'd, without any express command for that purpose? And if they had received such a command, and in consequence, made so great a change, in the constitution of the church, should we have had no account of it? would it not have made a noise and stir, among the believing Jews, or at least, have been a matter of record? Since therefore infants were admitted to the seal of the covenant of grace till the Apostles' day; and since we have no account that they ever rejected them, or cut them off, from that privilege: and *especially* since they baptized whole households, upon the conversion of the parents, or heads of the family: We have, I think, sufficient evidence, that it was their common practice to baptize them.

I now pass on to consider the evidence which we have, that the baptism of children was the constant practice of the primitive church from the Apostles' time; which will still confirm the evidence that it was *their* practice also. For it can't be supposed but that those, who liv'd so near the Apostles, as the first, second, and third centuries, must have known what was the practice of the Apostles themselves, and that they practis'd accordingly. For it is allow'd by all, that the church was then in its purity, and not corrupted with innovations, and superstitions: And the writers of those times are not only witnesses, that infant baptism was the practice in their day, but expressly declare, some of them, that it was the practice of the Apostles themselves, and of the church from their Time.

The 1st evidence I would produce is *Ireneus*, who, by the best accounts, was born before the death of the Apostle John, and was well acquainted with *Policarp*, who was John's disciple; and therefore could not be mistaken about the practice of the church down to his time. 'Tis true, he mentions infant baptism only transiently; for it had not then been a matter of dispute, and therefore there was no occasion given for arguing about it.

It must also be observed, that he, and many of the fathers, when they spoke of baptism, used the thing signified for the sign; and as in the old testament, circumcision is called the covenant, instead of the sign, and seal of the covenant; so by *Irenæus*, and others, baptism is called regeneration, because it is the outward sign of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. With how much propriety he calls it so is nothing to me, if it appears that he does call it so, and under that character speaks of it, as commanded to children and little ones, his testimony is directly to the purpose. And that he does use the word *regeneration* for baptism, is plain from his own words: “*When Christ, says he, gave his disciples the command of regenerating unto God: He said, go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*” Here it is plain, that by the command of regenerating, he means the command of baptizing; not that he supposes baptism was regeneration; but he puts the thing signified for the sign, just as God himself does, when he calls circumcision his covenant, which was a sign or token of his covenant.

Allowing then, that he uses regeneration for baptism, as the above quotation plainly proves, his testimony is plain for the baptism of infants; for he adds, “*Christ came to save those, who by him are regenerated unto God, (i. e. baptized) both infants and little ones, and young men, and elderly persons.*” Here he speaks of infants and little ones, being regenerated unto God. And that he uses the word regeneration for baptism, putting the thing signified for the sign, is further evident from the concurring practice of his contemporary writers; particularly *Justin Martyr*, who has these words: “*They are regenerated in the same way in which we have been regenerated, for they are washed with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*”

If it be said there was an impropriety in calling regeneration baptism, it is nothing to the present argument, for that they did call it so is undeniably fact from these quotations; and it is equally

fact that they spoke of it as commanded to infants, and little ones, as well as young men, and elderly persons.

In the beginning of the third century *Origen* expressly declares infant baptism to have been the constant use of the church. The occasion of his mentioning it was this, He was attempting in his eighth Homily to prove the doctrine of original sin, and that infants were guilty, as soon as born, and makes use of their baptism as an argument, “ *The baptism of children, says he, is given for the forgiveness of sins, but why, continues he, are infants by the usage of the church baptiz’d, if they have nothing that wants forgiveness? And again, he adds: It is because by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that infants are baptiz’d,*” with much more to the same purpose.

Here is as plain a testimony as can be given, that infant baptism was the standing usage of the church; and that it was then a point out of all dispute; or else he never would have thought it an argument to prove original sin. Nay, he not only asserts it to be the usage of the church in his time, but declares, that they received it from the Apostles; for in his comment on the epistle to the Romans, he has these words “ *The church had also from the Apostles, an order to give baptism to infants; for they, to whom the divine mysteries were committed, knew, that there was in all persons, a natural pollution, which ought to be washed away by water, and the Spirit.*”

Now *Origen* was born about the year of our Lord 183, within 100 Years of the Apostles themselves. Both his father and grandfather were Christians. He was one of the most learned men of that age, and preach’d the gospel in *Rome*, in *Greece*, in *Palestine*, and *Syria*, and therefore could not but be acquainted with the usage of all the churches. And the manner in which he speaks of it makes his evidence the *strongest*, as he uses it for an argument to prove another doctrine (*viz.*) original sin, which he could not have done with any propriety, if it had not been an universally acknowledg’d truth in his Day.

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Tertullian also, who was contemporary with *Origen*, gives us a plain Proof, that infant baptism was the constant practice of the church in his day.

It is true, he speaks against it, and advises that it should be delayed till grown to years, nay, till after marriage. The reason was, he had entertain'd a notion, that sins, committed after baptism, were next to, if not utterly unpardonable; and therefore advised that the baptism of children should be delayed, unless in case of necessity, even till after marriage, imagining they would then be less liable to temptation, &c. Many other odd and singular opinions are found in his writings, and therefore it may be remembered, that I neither quote *him*, or any *other* of the fathers, with a view to be determined, by their opinions, whether infants ought to be baptized, or not, but only to prove, what was matter of fact, that the baptism of children was the practice of the church, whether right or wrong; and *Tertullian* speaking against it, (for the reasons above mentioned) is as plain a proof of the fact as any of the rest. For if it was not the custom to baptize children, why should he speak against it? Surely he would not fight with his own shadow, or oppose a practice, or custom, that had no existence. And besides, he allows it in cases of necessity, (i. e.) when in danger of death: so that he was only against it for the absurd reason he mentions, lest they should fall into more aggravated sin. And therefore he would not have it administered in common cases, till after marriage.

The next evidence, I would produce, is the blessed *martyr Cyprian*, who was made overseer of the churches at Carthage, about 248 years after the birth of Christ. A question was started in his time, whether infants might be baptized, before they were eight days old? because that was the day in which circumcision was to be administered. On this he calls a council of ministers, no less than 66 in number, who all unanimously agreed, that baptism ought not to be delay'd till the eighth day, at least, that there was no necessity of such a delay. A large letter was wrote to this purpose, to satisfy all,
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who were in doubt about this question, and signed by *Cyprian* in the name of the rest.

Now observe, the question was not, whether infants were to be baptized this was allowed by all, but the only question was, whether like circumcision, it must be limited, to the eighth day from the birth ?

And this they determined in the negative, and say, it may with equal propriety be administered sooner.

St. Ambrose, who wrote about 274 years from the Apostles, declares expressly, that the baptism of infants had been the practice of the Apostles themselves, and of the church till that time. And this he mentions, only transiently, when speaking on another subject, which plainly proves it was not a subject of debate. It would weary your patience to cite all the authors that might be produced to this purpose. I shall therefore conclude with the testimony of *St. Austin*, who wrote his piece against the Donatists, about 300 years after the Apostles, in which, he has these very words, “ *If any ask for divine authority in the matter of infants being baptiz’d, tho’ that which the whole church practises, and which has not been instituted by council, but was ever in use, is very reasonably believ’d to be no other than a thing delivered by the authority of the Apostles, yet says he, we may take a true estimate how much baptism avails infants, by the circumcision which God’s former people received.*”

The same thing he urges in his controversy with *Pelagius*, which was about the year 410. Now *Pelagius* had taught, that infants were born free from any sinful defilements. *St. Austin* writes against him, and insists on the baptism of infants, which was the known and standing practice of the church, as an argument of their natural defilement. In this plea, he has these words, “ *That infants are by all Christians acknowledged to stand in need of baptism, which must be in them for original sin, since they have no other.* Again says he, *if they have no sin, why are they accepted to the usage of the church baptism? Why are they wash’d with the laver of regeneration, if they have no defilement?* D *Pelagius*

Pelagius was extremely puzzled with this argument, as he could not pretend to deny infant baptism. Nay, when some charg'd him with denying it (as the necessary consequence of his doctrine) he tries to refute the charge, and has these remarkable words.

“ *Men slander me, says he, as if I denied baptism to infants.*” This he calls a slander, and says that he never heard of any, no not the worst of Hereticks, that would say such a thing of infants.

This confession is the strongest demonstration, that infant baptism was universally practis'd, time out of mind; or else he, whose interest it was to deny it, to answer the arguments of his adversary, would certainly have done it. But so far is he from that, tho' his cause required it, that he expressly declares, he does not deny it, nor ever heard of any that did. Now *Pelagius* was a great scholar, and a great traveller. He had been to *Rome, Africa, Egypt* and *Jerusalem*, where he spent much time; and therefore must be acquainted with the rites of the fathers, and customs of churches in all those parts; and yet he declares, that he had never heard of any, that had denied baptism to infants. It is as plain then as history can make it, that there had been then no dispute about the point, and that there was not, neither had been any sect of people, professing Christianity, that denied it, from the Apostles' time to that day. Nor is there the least evidence, that it was ever oppos'd by any man, or society of men, for six or seven hundred years from that time. And now, what is the consequence? You see, that the baptizing infants was the practice of churches, derived from the Apostles' time, and so on for eleven or twelve hundred years, which is as plain a fact as history, and the writings of those times can make it. The consequence is, that if infant baptism is a nullity, and not agreeable to the institution of Christ, then the church must have lost an ordinance of Christ during all this period. Nay, they must have lost it in the very first ages, and purest times, and there must have been no regular baptism, consequently no Christian ministers,

ministers, or any ordinances, for eleven hundred years or more. And can any man, of an impartial mind, believe this? What then would become of our Saviour's promise, to be present in the Administration of baptism? *Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.* For that they baptized infants you see is fact; and if this was not agreeable to his institution, he could not be with them in the administration of that ordinance, and therefore his presence must fail, and his church, during all that long period, of many hundred years, must have had no regular baptism, and consequently could be no regular gospel church. And who can persuade himself, or imagine, that Christ had no church in the world during all that period? Besides, if infant baptism had, in any of those periods, been introduced by men, and had not been the custom of the church from the Apostles; how strange must it appear that there should be no account, no not the least hint, in all antiquity, when it was introduced, or by whom? Had it been a human invention, would it have been so universal in the first 300 years, and yet no record left, when it was introduced, nor of any dispute, or controversy about it? This is incredible.

We have particular accounts in history, when the baptism of infants began to be denied and disputed, and by whom; but no account of any Time, or means of its introduction; which is a plain proof that it must have been handed down from the Apostles, and have been a standing privilege in the church from their time. Again, if infant baptism is a nullity, it is plain, from the historical facts above mentioned, there can *now* be no regular baptism in the world, nor ever will be to the end of time: Since a succession of adult baptisms cannot so much as be pretended to.

Those then, who first began to baptize adults, were themselves baptized in their infancy, and therefore, being unbaptized themselves, according to the anabaptist's scheme, could never have authority to baptize others. So that all the present adult baptisms, if traced back, must come originally from
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those, who were baptiz'd in infancy ; and consequently, on *their* principles, can have no validity in them. We must therefore give into one of these three things, either *1st*. That a succession of adult baptists can be traced from the Apostles ; or *2^{dly}*. That infant baptism is valid, and agreeable to the institution of Christ ; or else *3^{dly}*. That there neither is, nor can be, any regular baptism in the church, to the end of the world.

The *1st* can never be done, as all must allow. The last is too shocking and impious to be admitted. And therefore the *2^d* must be acknowledg'd, viz. that infant baptism is valid, and agreeable to the institution of Jesus Christ ; for a fourth conclusion cannot be thought on.

III. But I hasten in the last place, to answer some of the most material objections, that are made against the doctrine ; and by which, those of contrary sentiments puzzle, and confound the minds of men ; and endeavour to render the subject obscure. The most common objections are such as these. *1st*. We have no express command in scripture for baptizing infants, and therefore, it is insinuated, we act without any warrant from the divine word. To this I answer, If there are virtual and implicit commands for it, and if it is commanded by clear scripture consequence, it is of equal force, as if it had been said in express terms, *baptize your infant children*.

A command may be as clearly infer'd, by way of consequence, from certain premises, as if it was in express words. See an instance of this in *Paul and Barnabas, Acts xiii, 46*. *Lo ! say they, we turn to the Gentiles, for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles.*... Now the command they speak of, is not at all *express*, but *implicit* ; for what they call a *command*, is a *promise*, made to Christ. *I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles*. This they construe to be an implicit command, directing them in the way of duty. — *Lo ! we turn to the Gentiles, for so hath the Lord commanded us*. Where had the Lord commanded them ? Why, *virtually* and *implicitly* in this promise, made to his

his son, *I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, &c.* This then being granted, that a virtual, and implicit command, is of equal force, as if it had been express'd ; it is easy to deny the objection, and say, we have many commands to baptize our infant children. And 1st. God's command to Abraham to circumcise his infant children is a virtual, and implicit command to believers to baptize *theirs* ; for believers are Abraham's spiritual seed, and heirs according to the promise. Here you see an express command was once given to initiate children into the church, by a sacramental rite that is commanded, and has never been repealed, and therefore still remains in force, as I have proved before. Again, Christ's commanding to suffer little children to come unto him, and not forbid them, is a virtual, or implicit command, that parents ought to bring their children to him in baptism. For the ground on which that command is founded, is, *of such is the kingdom of heaven.* Which, to make the least that can be made of it, is, that they have a visible interest in the covenant, and a right to membership in his visible kingdom. And we know, yea, it is acknowledged by *all*, that a visible interest in the covenant is the scripture ground on which baptism ought to be administered.

Again, the command that our Saviour gave, *Go and disciple all nations, and baptize them*, is an implicit, if not an express command, to baptize the children of Christian nations ; for *nations* must include children, as you see in the promise, made to Abraham, in thy seed, i. e. in thy children, shall all nations be blessed. Now if children are not here included in the words *all nations*, then it will follow, that all, that die in infancy, must perish without exception, having no interest in the blessings of Christ. And if the words *all nations* include them here, so it must in the commission above-mentioned, and consequently they are virtually, and implicitly commanded to be baptized. Again, the exhortation to the Jews in the text *to be baptiz'd*, is an implicit, if not an express command to baptize their children ; for the exhortation is grounded on the promise, and the promise is to them and their children.

Thus

Thus you see the scripture abounds with implicit, and virtual commands, to baptize our children, and such commands are look'd upon sufficient to determine our conduct in other cases, and therefore, why not in this? For example, who doubts but it is a commanded duty to keep the first day of the week for a sabbath, and yet where is the formal, express command? It is commanded *only* virtually and implicitly.

Who doubts that publick worship is a commanded duty? Yet, where is the express command in so many words? We are bid not to forsake the assembling ourselves together, but this is a negative precept, the affirmative requiring us *so* to assemble, is an implicit command. It is therefore a foolish cavil to say, there is no express command to baptize infants; for this may be said of womens' receiving the sacrament — of keeping the first day of the week — and a hundred other things, which all allow, are implicitly commanded, and have the same obligation on mens consciences, as if ever so formally express'd. Besides, what necessity could there be of an express command, for that, which had been once instituted, and never repealed? The children of covenanted parents were once expressly commanded to receive the seal of the covenant, and this command has never been reversed, as we have already prov'd, therefore the original express command continuing in force, there would be no necessity of another. And as it had been the constant practice of the church, for many ages, to administer the seal of the covenant to their children, there was no necessity of renewing the institution, in case it was to continue. But on the other hand, there was an absolute necessity of an express declaration against it, if it was then to have ceas'd.

Another objection is this, that there is no express instance in all the history of the new testament of an infant child's being baptiz'd; and therefore we proceed without any scripture example. Let me reply. I have told you already of whole households' being baptiz'd, on the conversion of the parent, or head of the family; which carries the strongest probability of the baptism of infant children, and would be easily understood to include

include them, had the same been said of circumcision. And there is the same reason for it in the one case, as in the other.

But supposing there is no express mention made in the history of the new testament, of one infant baptism, yet no man has any right to conclude from hence, that, in fact, there was none; for if so, we might as well conclude there were whole churches which never were baptiz'd. For there is no express account, in the history of the new testament, that the churches of *Antioch*, of *Iconium*, of the *Remans*, *Galatians*, *Thessalonians*, and *Colossians*, were ever baptized. Would it be fair to conclude, from hence, that they were not? Nay, you may read the history of the old Testament, for several ages of the church, and never find one instance of a child's circumcision. And will it do from hence to conclude, that they lived without circumcising their children? No! you will say, it may be argued by clear consequence; and so, I say, may the baptism of children; besides, this objection lies with greater force against *those*, who practise adult baptism, than it does against *us*; for they can't produce one example from scripture that warrants their practice. That there were many adult baptisms, I grant, because the subjects were grown to adult years before they profess'd Christianity. And in this we agree with them, that adult persons, who are converted from Judaism, or Heathenism, to Christianity, ought, in their adult years to be baptized, and all *such*, as have never been baptized before. But scripture instances of this are nothing to the purpose, for in this we all agree, and have no controversy. But if they would give a scripture example of their own present practice, they must give an instance of a person, born and bro't up of Christian, or baptiz'd parents, that was baptiz'd in adult years. If they could do this, it would be some evidence, that infant baptism was not in practice. If they cannot, as it is certain they cannot produce such an instance, let them no more pretend the want of scripture example against baptizing children, or that they have scripture example on their side. And why should there be no instances of this kind, if such was the common practice? For

For the history of the Acts of the Apostles, continued above the space of 30 years from Christ's ascent, to Paul's imprisonment, at Rome; and during that time thousands were born of Christian parents, and grown up to the age of 20 or 30 years, and yet there is not one instance in scripture of any such baptisms in adult years. If therefore they were not baptiz'd in infancy, there is no account of any, no not of one, of the posterity of Christian parents, being baptiz'd at all; for all the account of adult baptisms are only of such as in adult years embraced the Christian religion, having been before either Jews or Heathens.

A third objection is, that infants can receive no benefit from baptism, because of their incapacity, and therefore ought not to be baptized.

To this I answer, the same objection might be offered against their being circumcised under the law; for the capacity of infants is doubtless as great *now*, as it was *then*. Therefore, in the first place, infants are capable of being entered into covenant with God, for that the children of the Jews were so, is plain fact, not only from the tenor of the covenant with Abraham, which expressly included them, but from that solemn renewal of it in *Deuteronomy*, where their little ones are expressly mentioned, as partakers in the covenant transaction. Secondly they are capable of the seal of the covenant; for this was by God's appointment administered to them under the law, at eight days old. Thirdly, they are capable of being cleansed by the blood of Christ, and of being regenerated by his Spirit, which are the things signify'd by baptism. He, who denies this, must deny that they are capable of salvation, and therefore, dying in infancy, must perish, on supposition of original guilt and pollution from the first Adam, without their knowledge and consent; they certainly are as capable of deriving pardon, and renewing grace from the second Adam, without any explicit knowledge of, or actual consenting to his covenant. And if they are capable of the root, and principle of all sin, they are equally capable of the habit and principle of all spiritual grace.

Again,

Again, They are as capable of being laid under obligations of duty to God, to be perform'd when grown up, as the children of the Jews were, and the Apostle says expressly, *I testify unto every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to the whole law.* And why are not children now as capable of the baptismal obligations to the law of Christ, as the circumcised children of the Jews were, of being debtors to the law of Moses? And is it not matter of daily observation, that infants are capable of having earthly inheritances settled upon them, by instruments, signed and sealed, while they are ignorant of the whole transaction? And what reason can be given, why they should not be as capable of the blessings of the new covenant, and of having them sealed by baptism, tho' they are ignorant of it?

To say that it is no advantage to children to administer the seal of the covenant to them, because of their incapacity, is to reflect on an institution of Heaven, and on the wisdom and goodness of its author. The Apostle Paul was of another mind; for he says, the profit of circumcision was much every way, notwithstanding the incapacity of the subjects, being but eight days old.

But a 4th, and most common objection is, that faith and repentance, or a profession of them, at least, are mention'd in the new testament, as the necessary pre-requisites of baptism, and therefore, as children are incapable of these, they must be incapable of the ordinance itself. I answer, that children are capable, oft he habits and principles of faith, as has been observed before, and must be allow'd by all, who do not exclude them from salvation. Now is there a greater absurdity in allowing them to be capable of the root and principle of every grace, than to allow them to be capable of the root and principle of every sin? Besides, our Lord says of a little child, whom he set before his disciples, as a pattern of humility, *whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, that believeth in me, &c.* Whence it is plain, that little ones may believe in him, i. e. they may have the habits or principles of faith, tho' incapable of the act; or

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else,

else, as I said before, we must necessarily embrace that *uncharitable* sentiment, that all, who die in infancy, must perish without remedy.

If it be said, that it is a profession of faith, which the scripture mentions, as a pre-requisite to baptism ; I grant it with respect to adult persons, who embrace Christianity in their adult years. And this is all, that can possibly be argued from it ; for all must allow, that whenever these pre-requisites are spoken of in scripture, it is with reference to adults, who were converted from Judaism or Heathenism to Christianity ; and in all such cases, we allow, that there must be a profession of faith, antecedent to baptism. In this we have no controversy with those, who practise adult baptism. But they then must allow, that all these passages, which require the profession of faith, as necessary to baptism, have no reference at all to infants, but are intirely confin'd to those, who embrace Christianity in their adult years ; and therefore no argument can be drawn from hence, against the baptism of children : for they are not at all the persons spoken of. Yet we find, in fact, that when those adults, that embraced Christianity, in the Apostles' times, profess'd their faith, not only themselves, but their households, and all that were theirs, were baptized. And there is not a word said of such a profession being required of the members of those families, we must therefore conclude, either that they were young children, and so incapable ; or else, that adults were baptiz'd without a profession.

So under the ancient dispensation, the professing stranger was obliged to embrace the Jewish religion instantly, in order to his circumcision ; but when this was done, and himself circumcised, the same ordinance was always administred to his family and children, as you see *Exodus xii, 48, 49.*

So here, those adults, who were converted to the Christian religion, were obliged to profess their faith, in order to their being baptized ; and on this profession, not only themselves, but their households were baptized also.

This objection then, viz, *A profession of faith being a pre-requisite*

requisite to baptism, is no more an objection against children's being baptized, on the profession of their parents, than it was against the children's being circumcised, because the parents were previously obliged to embrace the Jewish religion.

Some other trivial objections there may be raised against the baptism of infants, but I know of none besides *these*, of any consequence, that have not been precluded in this discourse; and these, I think, every one must see from what has been said, are not of the least weight, when impartially examin'd, against the foundation, that has been laid of the covenant relation of the children of confederate parents, and the arguments that have been produced to prove their undoubted right to baptism, according to Christ's institution. The conclusion then is plain, that, as they had a right by God's own appointment to the seal of the covenant of grace, under the law, and as that right has never been repealed, either explicitly, or by consequence, it must still remain; and that, as it was the universal practice of the primitive churches, for the three first centuries, which were the purest times, and no account has been given, of its ever having been introduced as an innovation; it must have been the practice of the Apostles themselves, and must have its divine original in that covenant promise, made to Abraham, which the Apostle declares in our text is to believing parents and their children, under the gospel, as well as under the law. On the other hand to deny infant baptism to be a divine institution, is attended with many absurdities, and much confusion.

It is as much as to say that the covenant made with Abraham, including his children, is not an everlasting covenant; that therefore believers under the gospel are not Abraham's seed, and heirs of his promise; for his promise was to parents and children: Yea, that the ingrafted Gentiles do not partake of the same privileges, in the church, from which the Jews were broken off. And on the whole, that the privileges of the gospel dispensation are less than those of the law; all which are flat contradictions to scripture.

Again, to deny the validity of infant baptism, is as much as to say, that there was no true baptism in the church for 11 or 12 hundred years after Christ, and that the generality of the present professors of Christianity are now a company of unbaptiz'd Heathens; and although

though it must be allowed, that there are, and always have been, vastly more truly religious people, who have been baptiz'd in infancy, than of others; yet all who have been so baptiz'd, are on these principles, out of the visible church, and the consequence will be, that vastly greater numbers are sav'd out of the church, than in it, which is very absurd, to say no worse. These, and many other like consequences, necessarily follow from denying the validity of infant baptism.

Again, if infant baptism is a divine institution, and warranted by the word of God, then they who consent to be rebaptiz'd in their adult age, do in that transaction, necessarily renounce a divine institution, and an ordinance of Jesus Christ; and as it were vacate the former covenant between God and them, nay, they practically say, there are no baptiz'd persons, no regular ministers, nor ordinances, in all the numerous professing churches, but their own: and if the baptism of all those numerous professing churches is a nullity, all the administrations of their ministers must be so too, and then the promise of Christ, to be with his ministers, in the administration of this ordinance, to the end of the world, must have fail'd during those hundreds and hundreds of years, in which infant baptism was so universally practis'd.

Nay further, as the succession of adult baptisms cannot be traced to the Apostles' times, so it will follow, that if infant baptism is a nullity, there neither is, nor ever will, or can be, any regular baptism hereafter to the end of the world; and consequently an ordinance of Christ, as to its regular administration, must be lost; for adult baptism now administr'd, if originally derived from those, who were baptiz'd in infancy, cannot be valid, if infant baptism be not valid.

I have finish'd the subject, as far as it is a point of our controversy. It was my design to close all with an address, both to parents and children, enforcing the obligations upon *each*, in consequence of their solemn transaction with the great God, in this ordinance of baptism; but the time will not permit; perhaps this may be the subject of some future discourses.

Notwithstanding all that hath been said, some imagine, that how right soever we are as to the subjects of baptism, yet we are essentially wrong as to the mode---that if our children ought to be baptis'd, yet they are not baptis'd; for the scripture baptism is immersion, or plunging into the water, and our children are only sprinkled. But this objection I expect will be undertaken by my reverend companion in labour, and I doubt not will be solv'd to the entire satisfaction of every inquiring and attentive hearer. And, O may God lead us into all necessary truth, for Christ's sake! AMEN.

F I N I S.