

FOUR SERMONS

O N

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM;

IN WHICH THE
PRIVILEGE OF BELIEVERS,

UNDER THE GOSPEL,

RESPECTING THE
MODE AND SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM,

IS ESTABLISHED AND ILLUSTRATED.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE HEARERS.

By JEDIDIAH CHAPMAN, V. D. M.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AT ORANGE-DALE.

ELIZABETH TOWN:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY SHEPARD KOLLOCK.

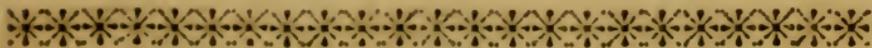
M, DCC, XCI.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermons were preached at the particular Request of a Number of serious Persons, without the most distant Thought of their Publication. However, through the Importunity of the Hearers, seconded by the Desire and Advice of several Gentleman, who honored them with a Perusal, they are now offered to the Public, with no small Degree of Reluctance, in their plain, native Dress.

The Author has Nothing further to add, except his most ardent Wishes, that they may be useful in the Cause of Truth, and promote the Glory of God, in uniting, edifying and comforting his dear People.



S E R M O N I.

ON CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

MATTHEW xxviii. 19, 20.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;—Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

My dear friends, and beloved brethren,

IT is my present design to address you on the serious and important subject of Baptism.—Treating this point, as God shall enable me, in a course of sermons, I shall endeavor to handle the subject with great plainness and candor, not seeking so much the applause of man, or the conviction of those who differ from us, as the establishment of your minds in the truth. The words which I have now read are joyful, solemn words. They were spoken in a very affecting situation—they are some of the last words of our blessed Lord and Saviour to his dear disciples. In the preceding chapter, we have an account of his crucifixion, and painful death on the cross—In this, of his joyful resurrection and appearance to the apostles, whom he informed of his acceptance with God as the Mediator and Saviour, and of his

great power in heaven and earth. He gave them the commission in our text—"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;—Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

I shall here mention several things of great importance to the subject before us, in which all parties agree; and beg you will keep them in view through the ensuing discourses.

First, Our blessed Saviour's command, in this text, is equally binding on all his ministers, in all ages of the world—that they are to preach the gospel to every creature, and to teach all who are capable of instruction, in all the doctrines he has revealed in his word.

Second, The ministers of Christ are to baptize among the nations, "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," all those, and only those, who, according to his revealed will, are the proper subjects of baptism.

Third, All his ministers, by this, are bound to teach the nations to observe and obey all things, whatsoever he hath commanded; all the laws, ordinances, and institutions, which, according to the scriptures, are in force under the gospel dispensation.

Fourth, Let it be well observed, that according to this promise, Christ will be with *his* minist-

ters, to support and comfort them—to bless and succeed them in the glorious work unto the end of the world. These things being observed, I shall proceed to consider our text, with reference only to the sacrament of baptism—and shall endeavor to shew,

I. That baptism with water is an institution of Christ, to be a standing ordinance in his church to the end of the world.

II. I shall speak of the mode of baptism as it respects the controversy between us and our brethren called Baptists.

I. I am to speak of water-baptism, and shew that it is an institution of Christ, to be a standing ordinance in the church to the end of the world.

There is a baptism of the Holy Ghost, and with fire, agreeably to Mark i. 8. “I, indeed, have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” Luke iii. 16. “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” But its administration Christ has reserved to himself. We no where read of his commanding any to administer such a baptism. Some, indeed, since the apostles’ day, have undertaken to do it; but we expect they will stand reprov’d in the great day of the Lord.

That baptism by water is an institution of Christ, is very evident from our text. “Go, says Christ, teach, or disciple all nations, baptizing them,” &c. They are commanded to teach,

and they are commanded to baptize. The same precept is also recorded, Mark xvi. 15, 16. “ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and teach the gospel unto every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”— We accordingly find the apostles, and primitive ministers of Christ, baptizing all whom they disciplined to him. On the day of Pentecost, when three thousand were added to the church in one day, the apostles called on them to repent, and be baptized. The Quakers, and some others, deny that baptism with water is to be continued in the church; but the contrary seems evident, from the very face of the command. The apostles, and succeeding ministers of Christ, were commanded to teach, to preach the gospel, and to baptize all nations; and in faithfully teaching and baptizing, Christ promises to be with them to the end of the world. Our blessed Saviour, likewise, expressly enjoins on the apostles, to teach his disciples to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded them; but baptism by water was the command which had just then proceeded from his sacred lips. It is manifest that the primitive church received the practice from the apostles, and observed it as a command of Christ.

The design of baptism as a seal of the covenant, and badge of the Christian profession—its use as an initiating ordinance into the church, and its obvious signification, all plainly shew it to be a standing institution in the church, and to be administered with water, to all proper subjects, “ in the name of the Father, and of the

“ Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” by all the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ.

II. I am now to speak of the mode of baptism.

Before I proceed, two remarks are worthy of particular notice.

1. As baptism is merely a positive institution of Christ, nothing, with regard to its mode, should be made essential, but what Christ has expressly enjoined. This observation must be too evident to meet with any opposition. Should any think this or that mode most decent, convenient, or significant, let them answer a good conscience, where the scriptures are silent; but let them not make it essential to baptism, unless it is expressly enjoined by Christ.

2. No denomination of Christians has a right to set up one mode of baptism as essential, and exclude all other modes without express scripture warrant, or some positive proof, that it is the will of Christ, the great king and head of the church. The reason of this is plain. Since it is the prerogative of Christ to appoint the ordinances of his church, it must belong to him alone to determine, what should be considered essential to them. For any, therefore, to determine the exclusive mode of baptism, or make any thing essential to it, which Christ himself has not appointed, is not only very uncharitable to their brethren, but also a great presumption on the prerogative of Christ. Our brethren, the Baptists, my hearers, hold with us, that baptism must be administered, by a regular minister of Christ,

with water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but, they assert, that it must be done in the mode of dipping, or plunging the whole body under water, otherwise it would be no Christian baptism. Let us now candidly examine this matter. The question is not, whether dipping or plunging is baptism, but whether plunging or dipping is the only Christian baptism. It is not sufficient for them to prove in the clearest manner, that plunging is a proper mode of baptism; but they ought to prove, and must prove, if they do any thing to the purpose, that plunging is the only baptism by water instituted by Christ. Inattention to this circumstance, I believe, has been the occasion of much doubt and confusion in the minds of some, if not the source of real imposition, in this point, on many Christians. But, I hope, your minds may be free from all such impositions, and that you may be able, in the truth, to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free.

Let us now, keeping these things in view, consider the words of the institution, as we have them in our text. “Go ye, therefore, and teach
 “all nations, baptizing them in the name of the
 “Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
 “Teaching them to observe all things whatso-
 “ever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with
 “you alway, even unto the end of the world.”
 Here we have the plain command to baptize, but not any thing positive respecting the mode. Does this prove that plunging is the only scripture-baptism?—Would not one of the baptists have expressed it differently, if he designed to establish dipping the body under water as the only

mode of baptism? Since the Baptists assert, that the true meaning of the word baptize, is to dip or plunge under water, this must command some attention; but as it will lead us back to the original language in which the gospel was written, waters too deep for most of you, my dear hearers, I shall first lead you where you may see for yourselves.

1. We assert, that the word baptize does not now generally signify to plunge or dip any thing under water; nor is it any where confined to this signification alone, but among the Baptists.—They say, on the contrary, that we have perverted the word to support our own practice.—We therefore assert,

2. That the word baptize did not, in our Saviour's time, always signify plunging or dipping, Luke xi. 38. "And, when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled, that he had not first washed before dinner;" or, as it is in the original, that he was not first baptized. We all know that *baptizing* here does not mean the dipping or plunging of the whole body under water, but only the washing of the hands. But is the word baptize here misapplied and perverted? Who has done it?

It is also certain, that this word is used by inspiration to signify divers washing without any reference to the mode. Mark vii. 4. "And from the market, except they baptize or wash, they eat not." The word *baptismous*, in this and the eight verse, deserves particular attention. Being in the plural number, it must signify various

modes of washing, of cups, pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. The word is likewise applied to the many kinds of ceremonial washings. Heb. ix. 10. "Only in meats and drinks, and divers baptisms or washings." Some of these washings or cleansings were performed by pouring, others by sprinkling, and some of them could not be done by dipping or plunging.

There are many other places in the scriptures where the word is used to signify any kind of washing or cleansing, even where there is no dipping. Some of our brethren, the Baptists, may, perhaps, still insist, that according to the best lexicographers and most approved masters of the original language, this word signifies dipping or plunging only.

It may therefore be necessary for their sakes, to pay some farther attention to this matter; though if all the Lexicons in the world should confirm their appropriate meaning of the word, it ought to have no weight with you contrary to the known use of it by divine inspiration—However, for your better satisfaction, I have examined a number of lexicographers, and find, that all of them allow the word *baptizo*, to signify any kind of washing, or cleansing with water. This matter, I believe, will be clear beyond all doubt, to any one who will take the trouble to examine Hesychius, Budeus, Scapula, Stephanus, and Dr. Leigh's *Critica Sacra*. They are all acknowledged to be great masters in the Greek language, and they allow the word to signify washing in general.

In their Lexicons and Commentaries, they say *baptizo lavo*, which signifies, beyond all dispute,

washing in general—*baptisma lavatio, ablutio*, washing, ablution, which we all know may be done, and is often well done without plunging the body all under the water. It is of no force to say, that the word also signifies to wash by dipping, or plunging; because it then allows of other modes of baptizing besides dipping.

This is granting all we contend for in the text, that our blessed Saviour did not command and fix any particular mode of washing with water in the sacred institution of baptism, and that he does not require dipping or plunging, any more than sprinkling or pouring, but only baptism.

Some say, that the word *baptizo* is derived from *bapto*, which all allow to signify dipping or plunging only, as the dyers do when they mean to tinge, or form a bright color; and, therefore, it must have been the design of our Saviour to fix the mode of baptism by that word.—But this is nothing to the purpose. If our Saviour designed to establish the mode by the word, why did he not in the institution of baptism, make use of *bapto* instead of *baptizo*, which would at once have carried the allusion more strongly, and forever fixed the mode of baptism to plunging only, as the Baptists would have it?—It is more than probable that the word *baptizo* was used by our Saviour, and not *bapto*; because it carried the beautiful allusion of the other, but left his church at liberty to use the various modes of administering the holy ordinance according to the different climes and seasons—according to the different circumstances and necessities—and according to the various infirmities of his dear people.

It was his maxim, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice."—But not to weary you with these remarks, we shall return to the law and testimony—I imagine you see that the mode of dipping as the only true baptism, is not enjoined by our Saviour in the words of the institution, where we should most certainly have found it, had it been his design—Let us examine scripture-example respecting the mode of baptism. There we have a right to expect some positive proof, that dipping is the only mode, especially since it is not positively and expressly enjoined in the words of the institution. But if all the examples of baptism we have recorded, were most evidently performed by plunging, it would no more than prove that plunging is one scriptural mode, or at least it would not alone prove, that it is indispensably necessary to baptism. The baptism of our blessed Saviour, by John, in Jordan, claims our first attention. Matt. iii. 16. "And Jesus when he was baptized, went straightway out of the water."—This may be true history, though he were not baptized by plunging. His coming up out of the water may have no respect at all to the mode of baptism; for it was manifestly after he was baptized. Here we might most surely have expected it to have been established, were any one of the modes of baptizing to be the only true baptism. But we are still left without any thing certain to determine, whether our blessed Saviour himself was baptized by sprinkling, pouring, plunging, or some other way.—Mark also says, "Jesus was baptized of John, in Jordan;" but respecting the mode, he is wholly silent.—He might have been baptized by either mode, especially as there was water enough for

dipping—The fact that Jesus came up out of the water after he was baptized, cannot with any certainty prove, that he had been plunged all under the water upon that solemn occasion.

The next example is John's baptizing at Enon, John iii. 23. "And John was also baptizing in Enon, near to Salem, because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized." This does not even prove that John baptized by plunging, much less that dipping is the only mode of baptism. Where there were such multitudes of people as resorted to John, much water must have been necessary for their use, had he baptized by pouring or sprinkling.

John, notwithstanding all that appears to the contrary from the sacred history, might have used all the modes on different subjects, according to their sex, age, and circumstance. On the day of Pentecost, when there were three thousand added to the church in one day, it is not very improbable that any of them, since it is incredible that all of them, were baptized by plunging. The baptism of the Eunuch is another example recorded in scripture—We have a particular history of this in the 8th chapter of the Acts of the apostles—"And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him; and when they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." This is a very particular description of the solemn transaction upon which the Baptists much insist, as a clear and positive proof, that plunging is the only scripture-baptism.

But I hope, in a few words to shew, that this is so far from proving, that dipping is the only scripture-baptism, that there is not any certain proof whether the Eunuch himself was baptized by plunging, pouring, or sprinkling. Here let it be noticed, that the Greek preposition *eis*, does not always signify, into, as it is here translated, but is often translated, *to or unto*—and *ek* translated, out of, very frequently signifies, *from any thing*. Agreeable to this, the passage may be thus read—“ And they went down both to the “ water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he “ baptized him; and when they were come up “ from the water,” &c.

I may now appeal to any impartial mind, that if any one should read this history, who has heard of baptizing only by pouring water upon the person baptized, whether he will not immediately say the Eunuch was baptized in that way; and whether he who has never seen the ordinance administered only by sprinkling of clean water, will not as certainly conclude, that Philip baptized him by that mode?—But could this possibly be the case, if there were in the text any clear and certain proof in favor of plunging? We will now consider the passage more critically—“ and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch.” The going down into the water could not be the baptism here recorded; because Philip must then also have been baptized, since they both went down into the water. But the plain fact is, that the going down into the water, is no part of the baptism here, but a distinct thing—“ And he baptized “ him.” This sentence contains the baptism, and

all that is certain about the mode in which it was administered. After the Eunuch was baptized, it is said, "they both came up out of the water." Does this prove that the Eunuch was plunged? and why not Philip? Since he also came up out of the water. Should it be granted that the Eunuch was dipped, which is by no means certain, it will not establish dipping as the only scriptural mode of baptism. Neither will it prove, that it is essential to the right administration of the ordinance, especially as it is not made necessary by him, who is the acknowledged author of the sacred institution.

Let us now consider those particular passages of sacred scripture, which are brought to prove that plunging is the only true mode of scripture-baptism—The first I shall take notice of is in Colossians ii. 12. and the parallel text in Romans vi. 4. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein ye also are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ, was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." It is very clear that the design of inspiration in these words, was not to establish any particular mode of baptism. It was to shew, that all those to whom he addressed himself, who were truly baptized into Jesus Christ, had really the internal change signified by baptism. They were baptized into his death, as the apostle expresses it. They were really dead, and buried with Christ as to sin, and with him were risen again; and

they also were really alive unto God, and could not desire to live any longer in sin.

This is true with respect to all those who have this internal spiritual change, by the washing of regeneration, and sprinkling of the blood of Christ signified by baptism; though they were baptized only by sprinkling. They are truly and spiritually baptized into his death—They “are buried with him by their baptism into death;” and they also “are truly risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Christ from the dead.”

Let us not, my hearers, be too strenuous, but candid and generous to our brethren, who seem to be a little straitened on this subject. Let us allow, that the apostle has reference to the external mode of baptism. It will then prove that plunging is an allowed mode—But grant that it was an approved mode; grant that it was a mode of baptism practiced in those warmer climes; and, still farther, grant that it was the only mode practiced by the apostles, even then it will not by any means follow, that plunging is the only Christian baptism. It is not expressly commanded, and exclusively enjoined by our Lord and Master, in the original institution; neither any where else in the sacred scriptures, is it intimated to be his will.

Some, to prove dipping to be the only baptism, have made use of 1 Cor. x. 2. “And were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea.” But it is probable, that they who imagine it to the purpose, are still where our fa-

thers were, under a cloud, and have not yet passed through the sea. Should any think it refers to the mode of Christian baptism, I shall only observe, that the spray of the waters on the right and left, and the mist of the cloud above, as they passed through the sea, gently sprinkling them, do as aptly represent, to an impartial mind, the mode of sprinkling. But the apostle, Eph. iv. 5. says, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." It is true that we acknowledge but one baptism by water, even *that* instituted by our blessed Lord in our text; but still there may be different ways of applying the water in the sacred washing, such as may answer a good conscience, and may most aptly represent the manner of his death with Christ, as to sin, and his rising again to spiritual life. The three modes used in the protestant church, taken together, may most fitly represent the out-pouring of that all-powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, by which the command comes home to the guilty soul: by which sin revives, and is overwhelmed in death. They may also represent that spiritual washing of regeneration and sprinkling of the precious blood of Christ, by which the soul is cleansed from sin and guilt, and rises with Christ to a new spiritual life and comfort, thro' faith, which is of the operation of God.

On the whole, it at least is evident, that our brethren the Baptists ought to be a little less positive on this subject, and more modest and charitable toward those who differ from them in that respect. They hold that without dipping or plunging the body all under the water, there is no Christian baptism; esteeming themselves;

from this principle, the only Christian church in the world: They will hold no Christian communion with any of the protestant churches.

The Episcopal church administers baptism by pouring, and those of their communion use that mode. We think the mode of sprinkling as scriptural as pouring or plunging; but yet we can use either mode as may best answer a good conscience to him who is baptised.

The mode of baptizing, by sprinkling clean water, we think was holden forth by the Jewish types, and clearly foretold of the Christian church in Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. "Then will I
 "sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall
 "be clean from all your filthiness, and from all
 "your idols will I cleanse you.—A new heart
 "also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put
 "within you; and I will take away the stony
 "heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a
 "heart of flesh." It is expressly promised to Christ, in Isa. lii. 15. "So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths
 "at him, for that which had not been told them
 "shall they see; and that which they had not
 "heard, shall they consider." This mode of baptism is very expressive of our being washed and cleansed from our sins, filth, and pollution, by the precious blood of Christ, which is, therefore, called the blood of sprinkling. Heb. xii. 22—24. "But ye are come unto Mount Zion—
 "and to Jesus the Mediator of the New-Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that
 "speaketh better things than that of Abel."—
 1 Pet. i. 2. "Elect according to the fore-know-

“ ledge of God the Father through sanctificati-
 “ on of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling
 “ of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

Upon the whole, it is clear to me, beyond a doubt, and I seriously think it will also appear to every impartial mind, that it was not the design of Christ to confine his church in the administration of baptism, to either of the modes which have been mentioned. He, therefore, has given sufficient light in his word, to countenance the use of either mode, as the circumstances and necessities of his people may require. To ascertain the proper subjects of this ordinance, is a matter of much greater importance. I shall, therefore, proceed upon that subject, after making a few remarks.

1. Our brethren are most certainly wrong and schismatical, in rejecting all other Christian churches, on account of their difference in the mode of administering baptism. They have no sufficient warrant to make dipping or plunging essential to the very being of baptism.—We do not doubt that many of them think they are right; but it is very clear to me, that such have never thoroughly and impartially examined the sacred scriptures, or have not yet learned what that meaneth, “ I will have mercy and not sacrifice.”

2. We may, and ought to own those ministers and churches which Christ Jesus owns, and blesses with his graces, presence and influence in the administration of his word and ordinances, agreeably to his precious promise in the text.—We believe he thus owns some of the Baptist

churches and ministers; and, if we make the comparison, we trust some of our ministers and churches are nothing behind them. Should we not then bless God together, and love one another as brethren? Who objects to this? Let him answer it to our Lord and master. But rather let him now, in love, receive the light and truth as it is in Jesus—let him learn to be less bitter and censorious—let him be more modest and charitable towards the church of Christ, and let him not make a schism where Christ makes no difference.

3. It is of great importance as matters now stand, that we all should critically and impartially examine the sacred scriptures on this point. Important for us that we may know and have our minds established in the truth; and be able to “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.” Important for the Baptists, that they may be less zealous in matters non essential; but more zealous in the things that make for the peace, and the edifying of the body of Christ in love; lest some of them suffer loss when they shall be saved so as by fire, and others stand reprovèd in the great day of the Lord.

S E R M O N II.

THE QUALIFICATIONS IN ADULTS FOR ADMISSION TO BAPTISM.

ACTS viii. 37.

And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.

THIS was the answer given by Philip, an eminent preacher of the gospel, to the Ethiopian Eunuch's request to be baptized. "See," said the Eunuch, "here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip replied, "if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."—The Ethiopian answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Upon this profession he was baptized.

There are two questions about the proper subjects of baptism. One respects adult persons—the other infants. Our text has immediate reference only to the former, and is a proper answer to that question.

We shall, therefore, now proceed to consider, who, among the adults to whom the gospel is preached, are to be baptized, or what qualifications in such are necessary to baptism. Let it here be well remembered, that as the sacred scriptures are the rule we must neither increase, nor

diminish the qualifications therein prescribed.—
I shall, therefore, call your attention,

I. To the sacred scriptures on this subject.—
And then proceed,

II. To prove the necessary qualifications for
adult baptism, from the nature, use, and design
of the sacred institution.

The enquiry now before us is, who among the
adults, that live under the light of the gospel,
and are capable of hearing and understanding its
solemn and interesting report, are to be baptiz-
ed?—The observations which shall be made in
this discourse, are to be understood with refer-
ence only to these. The other question, respect-
ing infants, must be distinctly considered in an-
other place.

On this subject, my brethren, we have the
Bible open before us; but the text claims our
first attention, because of its place at the head of
this discourse; “If thou believest with all thine
“heart, thou mayest” be baptized. This text
must be allowed to import, that if thou dost not
believe with all thy heart, thou must not be
baptized—I may not baptize thee. It is evident
that Philip here intended two things by his an-
swer. 1. To refer the Eunuch to his own con-
science before God. 2. To obtain some credible
evidence of the true state of his mind. The first
being clear, the Eunuch readily and solemnly
answers the second in the following emphatical
words—*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of
God.* What kind of faith is here required by the

Evangelist, is the only question that remains to determine the sense of the text; for it must be supposed, that the Eunuch professed the same faith which Philip required. Some imagine it to be only what is called an historical faith—A common bare assent of the understanding to the history of the gospel—such as those commonly have who are educated under its light. But how this can be called believing with all the heart, can hardly be conceived, since the very definition wholly excludes the heart.

Others suppose it is the faith that, in some measure, realizes to the mind the solemnity and importance of the facts holden up to view in the gospel, which must greatly affect the soul, and make the sinner tremble; but does not imply any change of heart, or real conformity of it to the things believed.—But how can this be a believing with all the heart, which is, according to the supposition, a believing against the heart!—Thus the apostle says, “The devils believe and tremble.” But let the scripture explain itself, and we shall not here be at a loss. Rom. x. 9, 10. “That if you shalt confess with thy mouth “the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart “that God hath raised him from the dead, thou “shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth “confession is made unto salvation.” To believe in the heart, and with the heart, is a saving faith in scripture-language; “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” It is also observable, that the true confession with the mouth flows from a believing heart; for thus confession is made unto salvation.

It is evident, that in order to baptism, the Evangelist required saving faith in Christ, and that of one also who was not a heathen. It seems, hence, clearly to follow, that of those to whom the gospel is preached, no one is to be baptized but the believer, and he only upon giving credible evidence of his saving faith in Christ Jesus. This agrees with the most obvious sense of the commission, Matth. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 15, 16. “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

It accords with the doctrine Christ taught long before, see John iii. 5. “Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

It also seems to have been the uniform practice of all the apostles, according to the inspired records of their conduct. Acts ii. 38—41 “Then Peter said unto them, 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. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

True repentance necessarily implies a change of heart; therefore to give up ourselves to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, as called upon in the text, pre-supposes a saving faith.—It pre-supposes that faith, which is connected with the forgiveness of sins. But to clearly determine the matter, it is added in the 41st verse, “Then they that gladly received the word,” which is the same as believing with all the heart, “were baptized.” Here it is manifest that the apostles baptized none of the many thousands, who heard them preach on that solemn occasion, but those who appeared cordially to embrace the gospel, Acts viii. 12, 13. “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also,” &c. Simon was baptized only on the supposition of saving faith, and was rejected immediately when it appeared, that he was in the gall of bitterness, and bonds of iniquity. I find no example in this sacred history, of adult persons, who were baptized, but what confirms the same thing.*

Upon the whole, it is very evident, that though the apostles preached the gospel to every creature, to Jews and Gentiles, yet they baptized no adult persons, unless they made a profession of real religion, and gave credible evidence of saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus it appears from scripture, that nothing short of true and saving faith renders an adult person a proper subject of Christian baptism.—I shall now proceed.

D

* See the instance of Lydia and the Jailer—Acts xvi. 15—34.

II. To argue the necessary qualifications for adult baptism, from the nature, use, and design of the sacred institution.

Under this head I shall endeavor to shew, from a variety of considerations, that faith in Christ, and nothing short of it, qualifies an adult person for baptism.

This will appear, *first*, from the use of baptism as an initiating ordinance into the church. Our blessed Saviour, speaking of adult persons, says, John iii. 3. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." In the 5th verse—"except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And in John xviii. 36. "Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." The apostle also asserts, Titus ii. 14. "That Christ gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

If the church of Christ is to consist of a peculiar people, separated from the world—if a man must be born of the Spirit to enter into this kingdom, it must follow that baptism, which introduces an adult person into the visible church, as a qualified member, ought not to be administered to any of these but upon credible evidence, that they are thus qualified. This is exactly agreeable to the answer of our question, in the Shorter Catechism, which says, "That baptism

is not to be administered to any who are out of the visible church, until they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him."

2. From the design of baptism, as a seal of the covenant of promise, both on God's, and on our part. In this covenant are promises to the church in general, and to the believer in particular, for himself and his children, as I shall shew on another occasion. But nothing short of faith in Christ brings an adult person into this covenant, and entitles him to the promises. The promises are yea and amen, only in Christ Jesus, agreeably to 2 Cor. i. 20. Since it is by faith only that a person, who acts for himself, or who, according to the gracious constitution, acts for others, agrees to the covenant, or takes hold of the promise, it is a great absurdity to administer baptism, which is a seal of the covenant to any adult unbeliever. Faith, therefore, in Christ, or an hearty agreement to the covenant on our part is absolutely necessary to baptism.

3. Adult baptism is a public solemn profession, that we do forsake our sins, that we renounce our idols, and give ourselves and ours to God through Jesus Christ. But no person actually does this except he has faith in Jesus Christ. Philip, therefore, said, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest" be baptized. Consequently true faith is a necessary qualification in adult baptism. But to sum up the whole, and bring it before you in one view—If adult baptism signifies any thing spiritual on the part of the baptized, if it seals to him any promise for himself, or for his children, it must suppose real faith. For example:

The washing away of our sins by the blood of Christ must certainly suppose faith in Christ, or else it signifies that which is not true. If it seals to adults the promised blessings of the new covenant for themselves, or for their children, it is only through Christ, and necessarily supposes faith. In whatever light we consider the subject, saving faith appears to be a qualification essentially necessary for adult baptism. All the instances of adult baptism, we have recorded in the sacred scriptures, are full on this point. They clearly shew, that the apostles, and primitive disciples of Christ did not baptize any to whom they preached the gospel, on the supposition of a mere historical faith, or because they were only seriously affected. Felix trembled, but was not baptized. And, no doubt, many others trembled under the powerful preaching of the apostles on the day of Pentecost; but we do not read that any of them were baptized, except those who gladly received the word. When the apostles went out to the Gentiles, they preached the gospel to vast multitudes; but we do not find that they baptized any adults, either men or women, except those who made a credible profession of their faith in Christ.

We have sufficient light, therefore, whether we look directly to the scriptures, or reason on the nature, use, and design of this institution, to shew us that faith is an essential pre-requisite to adult baptism; or that this ordinance must not be administered to any but through the qualifying influence of this grace. The reason is obvious. All the promised blessings of the covenant of grace are treasured in Christ for his church

and people, and flow out to them only through faith. This alone unites us to him, and gives us a gracious title to the privileges and blessings granted to believers, either for themselves or their children. The apostle addressed the multitude on the day of Pentecost, exactly in this connexion.

Pressing on them the call to repentance, faith, and baptism, by this very argument, he said, “ Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins—For the promise is to you, and to your children.” It is plain, that there is neither force nor propriety in this, unless repentance and faith were necessary to baptism, and to the enjoyment of the blessings and privileges of the gospel church.

That which qualifies an adult person for baptism, gives him, through this ordinance, an equal right to enjoy all the privileges and blessings of the free citizens of Zion. But nothing short of faith in Christ can give an adult person, before God, and nothing short of a credible profession of it can, in the view of the church, give him a right to the enjoyment of all these blessings and privileges. Faith in Christ, therefore, must be considered as an essential qualification for adult baptism—And, upon the strictest examination, this will be found to be agreeable to the practice of the church in purest times. It also has been the sentiment and practice of the most pious and successful ministers of Christ in every age of the church—and it agrees with the confession of the faith of our church, and I believe of all the best

reformed churches in the world. This discourse shall now be closed with a few remarks.

1. Baptism is a solemn institution. It is undoubtedly of equal authority and solemnity with the holy ordinance, the Lord's supper. Some seem to have loose ideas of baptism, and of the qualifications necessary for its proper subjects, who, at the same time, are very superstitious respecting the holy supper. But, according to scripture, they are both on the same foundation—Both equally solemn and sacred. They have one author. They are seals of the same covenant; and they are both sacraments of the new testament, and require the same qualifications in adult persons—In both we have to deal with a heart-searching God; and we are to give up ourselves in covenant to him, through Jesus Christ, to be his for ever.—The sin of coming unqualified to both, is equally heinous—The prophanation of either is equally dangerous.—He who comes properly qualified to baptism, ought to bless God, and come cheerfully to the Lord's supper.

2. The true church is founded on the rock Christ Jesus. Since baptism is the initiating ordinance into the church, faith in Christ is necessary to baptism in adult persons. A credible profession of this faith is the ground upon which baptism is to be administered to any adult person. Accordingly we find that when Peter professed his faith in Christ, our blessed Saviour answered, (Matt. xvi. 18.) “And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell

“ shall not prevail against it.” There may be other churches, and indeed there must be other churches, who are not built on this foundation, and make not any, or a different profession.— They may be numerous and flourishing; but they certainly will be entirely consumed when every man’s work shall be tried by fire.

3. The church of Christ ought to hold the ordinance of baptism, very dear and sacred. This not only signifies and seals to believers the inestimable blessings and privileges of the new covenant; but is the ordinance of admission into the church. Oh! how careful should the ministers and churches of Christ be in their conduct, lest this sacred ordinance be prophaned! They should always be vigilant, lest any should prostitute it to purposes foreign to the sacred design of its institution. The world should know that ministers have no right, but from Christ, to administer baptism to any. Every one ought to know, that it is not a matter of favor with them, which they may bestow at pleasure, but at their peril. The word of God is their rule: And we all know, or ought to know, that when this sacred institution is misapplied and abused, it is always attended with some of the worst consequences, both to the church and to the souls of men.

4. They who despise and wilfully neglect this ordinance, cannot be Christians. Though we do not hold that baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation; yet since it is a positive institution of Christ, and enjoined on his church as a standing ordinance, they who wilfully neglect it, they

who despise it, are certainly chargeable with continued disobedience to him, and must be considered as destitute of the distinguishing qualifications of Christians.

5. All those who are baptized are under most solemn obligations to live holy lives—They are given up to God—They are set apart for him—They ought to give up themselves wholly to God and his service, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in all manner of conversation. For them now to live in sin, and to pursue the ways of the wicked, is to deny their baptism; is to disown the God of their fathers, and to load their souls with aggravated guilt. Be persuaded then, all you of this character, to renounce your transgressions, spare your own souls, and give glory to God through Jesus Christ. Some of you have solemnly acknowledged these obligations before God and his people; and have sealed the covenant at the Lord's table: You ought, therefore, to love and serve him, whom you have thus acknowledged to be your God and Saviour. Consider, Oh! consider how aggravated your sins must be against such solemn ties! Can you think any obligations so sacred, so solemn, so often confirmed, as those which you are under, to forsake all the ways of sin, to live to God, and to serve him with your whole soul?

S E R M O N III.

I N F A N T B A P T I S M.

GAL. iii. 29.

*And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed,
and heirs according to the promise.*

RESPECTING the eternal council of God the Father, and the design of his grace towards our lost world, we are informed, John iii. 16. That "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

To complete this glorious work of salvation; to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people; to destroy satan's kingdom and to bring glory to God in the salvation of sinners—Jesus Christ was appointed Mediator of the New-Covenant. It pleased God, soon after the fall of man, to reveal this gracious design, and set up his church and kingdom on earth, which he has supported in every age of the world. To the members of this kingdom, God has, at different times, promised certain blessings, and granted certain privileges gradually displaying the riches of his grace and goodness, in a variety of successive dispensations. The first gracious intimation is recorded Gen. iii. 15.

where it is promised, that “ The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” It pleased God more fully to reveal this glorious design to Abraham. With him he established a gracious covenant; a covenant which contained certain promises. To him he also granted certain blessings and privileges, both for his natural and spiritual seed, (Gen. xvii. 7.) Upon this I shall hereafter have occasion to speak more fully.— God thus constituted him the Father of the Faithful. He thus established his covenant, that they should not only pattern his faith, but that all his spiritual seed or children should also inherit the spiritual blessings and privileges of the covenant of promise. This the apostle, more than once or twice, expressly asserts in our context. “ Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”* Then he sums up the whole in our text. “ If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” That the promise here mentioned, contained spiritual blessings and privileges; that God granted these to Abraham as the Father of the Faithful; that it was one of those blessings contained in this covenant of

* Verses, 7, 8, 9, 14, 26.

promise; that infants were to be received with their parents into the church, and have the seal of the righteousness of faith administered to them—that this blessing, or privilege of Abraham, is now come upon the Gentiles, through faith in Christ, as is asserted in the 14th verse—and that all who are Christ's, are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise as expressed in our text, seem to be incontestable truths. The doctrine inferred from the words of our text, in this connexion, as the subject of the ensuing discourse, is,

That believers under the gospel dispensation have a right to baptism for their infant children, or that the infants of such are to be baptized.

To illustrate and establish this doctrine, it is proposed by divine assistance to shew,

I. That God did graciously grant unto Abraham, as the father of believers, that infants should be received into the visible church with their parents.

II. That God commanded, that the seal of the righteousness of faith should be administered unto them.

III. That this great privilege is, under the gospel, confirmed and continued to believers. Or that the infant children of believers are to be baptized.

I. I am to show, That God did graciously grant unto Abraham, as the father of believers,

that infants should be received into the visible church with their parents.

That the truth of this may clearly appear, several things command particular attention.

1. At a time when religion was very low in the world, and when the visible church was almost extinct, God called Abraham out from the wicked world, in order to set up his church and kingdom in his family.*

2. When God had tried and proved Abraham's faith and obedience,† he established his covenant with him as an everlasting covenant, and set up his church in Abraham's house.‡ Here we see certain commands enjoined on Abraham; certain institutions for him to observe, and certain blessings and privileges granted to him for himself, and for his seed. These blessings were to continue in the church, and to descend to his children through succeeding ages. This was an everlasting covenant. "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee."

3. Let it be strictly observed, that the spiritual blessings contained in this covenant, were granted to Abraham as a father to the faithful. They are summed up in these emphatical words; "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." The Jews themselves understood it in this view, but confined the blessings, both spiritual and temporal, to Abraham's natural seed through the law. This gross mistake the apostle corrects, in the chapter containing our text,

* Gen. Chap. 12. † Chap. 15, 16. ‡ Chap. 17.

by clearly shewing, that they were designed for his spiritual seed also, through the gospel, whether Jews or Gentiles. The true state of the matter was this—The visible church at that time was almost swallowed up in a deluge of idolatry, and wickedness—but God was pleased to call forth Abraham, and begin a new dispensation of grace to his church. To display more fully his glorious design, he gave richer promises, and granted more ample privileges.

This was to be an everlasting covenant, 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 thy seed after thee.”

4. In this dispensation of his grace to his church, he expressly granted unto Abraham this great privilege, that infants should be received into the visible church with their parents; and he ordered that the sign of the covenant should be administered to every male child at eight days old. The same day, in obedience to the divine command, was Abraham circumcised, and his son Ishmael.*

Here, my brethren, was something new and glorious—Abraham, through this covenant, no doubt, saw Christ, the glorious head of all his spiritual seed, and was glad, as our blessed Saviour observes.†

Under this dispensation you see that God appointed and commanded, that infants should be

* Genesis xvii.

† John viii. 56.

received into the church with their parents. Infants, by circumcision as an initiating ordinance, were admitted into the church. Thus the apostle says, Acts vii. 8. "And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day," &c.

It is very evident that the church once possessed this inestimable privilege of giving up their children to God in the covenant of promise; and it is as evident that by the special command of God, the faithful, in the only true church, enjoyed the same through succeeding ages. They also had many precious promises for their children recorded in the sacred oracles, all which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus to believers.—Of this I shall have occasion to speak more freely in another place.

II. I propose to shew, that God did command, that the seal of the righteousness of faith should be administered to infants. To prevent a difficulty from arising in your minds, I would here observe, that no sign nor seal, which is wholly legal, and respects only temporal blessings, can, with any propriety, be called a seal of the righteousness of faith. Those who believe the sacred scriptures, cannot doubt, that God commanded circumcision to be administered to infants of eight days old.*

It is commanded, that not only Abraham must circumcise his own children, but it is expressly commanded, that his seed after him must be cir-

* Genesis vii. 10—12—14.

cumcised in their generations. So strict was the command, that every uncircumcised male child was ordered to be cut off from God's people, because he had broken the covenant. Some, perhaps, may say, that this is nothing to the purpose, for circumcision was a carnal, legal, bloody ordinance. They may say, that it was a covenant of works, and could have no respect to Christian baptism. But, my hearers, let your minds be calm and attentive. As for such rangers, let them take heed lest they be found to oppose the apostle, and contradict the spirit of inspiration. Circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith, The very same circumcision which God appointed, and commanded to be administered to infants, who were, by it, admitted into the covenant of promise with their parents, was a seal of the righteousness of faith.— Faith is not of works, but of grace.

Whatever ends circumcision might be supposed to answer in this, or the succeeding dispensation, yet it was here a seal of the righteousness of that faith, by which a believer is justified and saved. The apostle Paul referring expressly to this command of circumcision, and speaking of the blessedness of those whose sins are forgiven, says, Romans iv. 9, 10, 11, 12. “ Cometh this
 “ blessedness then upon the circumcision only,
 “ or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say
 “ that faith was reckoned to Abraham for right-
 “ teousness.—How was it then reckoned? when
 “ he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?
 “ Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.—
 “ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal
 “ of the righteousness of the faith which he had

“ yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the
 “ father of all them that believe, though they be
 “ not circumcised, that righteousness might be
 “ imputed unto them also:—And the father of
 “ circumcision to them who are not of the cir-
 “ cumcision only, but who also walk in the steps
 “ of that faith of our father Abraham, which he
 “ had being yet uncircumcised.”

Having proved to you that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and having proved, that God himself commanded it to be administered to infants as a standing ordinance in his church, under the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensations of the covenant of promise, it, therefore, must be evident to every impartial mind, that the true church once had this grant from heaven, and that the members of the visible church did once, and for a long time enjoy this great, this interesting privilege. They did give up their infant offspring to God, and in token of this the seal of the righteousness of faith was administered to them.

These are the points which were to be established under the first and second heads of this discourse. But before I proceed to the next head, it may be necessary to answer some objections, which have been thrown in the way of the truth, and which may still be lurking in some of your minds.

It has been said, that the law given at Sinai disannulled this covenant with Abraham; that the law was four hundred and thirty years after this; and that, since it was an entire new dis-

penfation, attended with many new ceremonies, it muft have rendered the Abrahamic difpenfation ufelefs. In confequence of this remark, fome have faid, that all arguments drawn thence are of no weight, and tend only to confufe and deceive weak minds. All this is very plaufible, indeed; and may have great weight with fome; but it is eafy to fhew every candid mind that the affertion is falfe, and that the objection has no force.

1. Though it fhould be granted that the Abrahamic difpenfation ceafed, when fucceeded by the Mofaic economy; yet it will by no means follow, that the covenant of promife was made void. Neither will it follow, that any of the bleffings and privileges once granted to believers, were taken away. Thefe may ftand good, and promifed bleffings be more clearly holden up to view, and more liberally beftowed on the church, in a new way, by the fucceeding difpenfation, agreeably to the gracious design of God, more fully to difplay his mercy.

2. It is certain, that circumcifion, as a fign of the Abrahamic covenant, and as a feal of the righteousnefs of faith, was continued under the Jewish difpenfation; that the privileges granted to the church were continued—that many of the bleffings promifed to Abraham, as the father of believers, were enjoyed by the Jewish church, and that God beftowed thefe bleffings on that people, as the God of Abraham, the God of Ifaac, and the God of Jacob. It, therefore, muft follow, that the Abrahamic covenant was not made void by the Jewish difpenfation.

3. But what is more than all, we have the apostle's express declaration on this head—a declaration, which, when properly considered, must for ever silence all such objectors. Gal. iii. 17. “ And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before 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.” If the law, or Jewish dispensation, had made void this great promise, or privilege, it would now have been of none effect.—The blessings could not have come upon us Gentiles.

III. It is here proposed to shew, that the privilege once granted to Abraham, as the father of believers, that infants should be received into the visible church with their parents, is confirmed under the gospel, and is continued to believers. Here it would be easy to shew, that all the promises, blessings and privileges of the church, contained in every dispensation, in all their true spiritual meaning, are, under the gospel, confirmed and continued to believers; but we are confined, by the narrow limits of our discourse, to only one privilege. But let it be our present comfort, that this is not small.

1. Every spiritual privilege once granted to the church by its great King and Head, remains in full force until repealed. This may be thus illustrated—God once granted unto Abraham, as a father in the church, the privilege of giving up himself in covenant. This remained in force under the Jewish dispensation to all his seed, and as it is not yet repealed, remains still in force to

all his spiritual children. This, I believe, will hold good with respect to all the spiritual blessings and privileges God has granted to his church in every age. Modes and shadows may be changed, but the substance still remains. It has been proved, that God did grant and confirm unto his church the privilege that infants should be received into the visible church with their parents, and that the seal of the righteousness of faith should be given unto them. This, unless it has been repealed, most certainly remains as an inheritance for believers, which they may enjoy as members of the visible, church and true children of Abraham. For to use the apostle's argument, believers are all one in Christ Jesus, and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise,

If believers have now an undoubted right, by heirship, to all the privileges of the covenant of promise granted to Abraham, which are not repealed under the gospel, we may boldly assert, that if this privilege is not now repealed, the command of God is now on all true believers to give up their infants to him in covenant; and, as a token to this, ought to administer to them that which is now the sign of the covenant, and seal of the righteousness of faith,

But we believe, and confidently affirm, that all the spiritual blessings and privileges formerly granted to the church are now in full force.

We have particularly proved, that this privilege also was once granted, it, therefore, remains confirmed under the gospel; and continued to

believers. Those who undertake to release Christians from this command of God, and deny believers the inestimable pleasure of giving up their dear infant-offspring to God in covenant through Jesus Christ, ought now solemnly to prove, that this privilege is made void by the gospel. The burden of proof now lies upon our brethren, the Baptists. Here we ought alway to put the laboring oar into their hands, and then let them labor since they will undertake it. But, alas! their task here is as difficult as it is unthankful. —Our blessed Saviour charges us not to think that he came to “destroy the law and the prophets,” (Matth. v. 17.) The apostle also assures us, that all the promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, (2 Cor. i. 20.) Agreeably to this we may be assured that Christ came to be unto his dear people all that the law typified of him —to fulfil all that the prophets foretold of him, and to bestow all the spiritual blessings promised in his word.

But let us calmly hear, and let us without prejudice examine what our brethren the Baptists say to prove that this privilege is repealed by the gospel.

1. It is said that this covenant belonged to the Jewish dispensation, which was wholly done away by Christ, and that consequently it is now of no force.

Ans. 1. But though we allow that the Jewish dispensation is now wholly done away—though we also grant that this privilege belonged to it, yet it will not follow that this, or, indeed, any of

the spiritual blessings and privileges are now repealed. We must here distinguish between a dispensation, and the blessings dispensed. The former is the way in which the latter are displayed and communicated. The Jewish dispensation was only the manner which God chose, by various laws, types and shadows to display and communicate the blessings of his covenant to the Jewish church. It is easy to see, that one dispensation may entirely cease and give place to another, and yet all the covenant-blessings and privileges of the former may be continued, and, indeed, many more added and enjoyed under the latter. This, in fact, has been the case in the church through various successive dispensations, as might very easily be shewn, were it necessary.

2. But we utterly deny that the covenant of promise containing the privilege for which we contend, ever belonged to the Jewish dispensation. We assert the reverse, that the Mosaic dispensation belonged wholly to this, and was added four hundred and thirty years after, for special reasons as the apostle says.* Since therefore, the giving of the law did not disannul the covenant of promise, the taking of it away, certainly could not destroy the privilege for which we contend. Neither could it make void the solemn command by which it was enjoined, nor hinder the blessing of Abraham, in this respect, from coming on the Gentiles. This is most evidently the true state of the matter. When the Jewish dispensation was taken away, the covenant command and promise, with all the spiritual privileges and blessings, came under the gos-

* Gal. iii. 17, 18.

pel dispensation confirmed to true believers, the spiritual seed of Abraham, the true heirs according to the promise. Thus it is easy to see, how the blessing of Abraham is now come on us Gentiles.

To this it is objected that the promise of the land of Canaan is done away. Though this objection is not so very evident in every respect; Yet grant it, and then the heavenly Canaan remains to the Church, which was the spiritual meaning of the original promise. That circumcision is abolished by the gospel, is another objection. But notwithstanding this, the spiritual blessings signified by circumcision, remain under the gospel; and Jesus Christ fulfils it to his people by circumcising their hearts. Christ, under the gospel dispensation, has also instituted baptism, to be the sign of the covenant, and the seal of the righteousness of faith. This, therefore, is called by the apostle the circumcision of Christ. Col. ii. 11, 12. "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," &c.

Baptism now remains under the gospel an initiating ordinance into the church. It is now the sign of the covenant of promise, and the true seal of the righteousness of faith. From this there is not the least evidence that the command is repealed, and the granted privilege taken away; but, on the contrary, it clearly shews, that they are in full force on believers under the gospel.

Though the Jewish dispensation be abolished—though circumcision be done away, yet the grant is not repealed—the privilege remains to believers—the command is in full force, and since baptism is the circumcision of Christ, and a seal of the righteousness of faith, through the administration of this, the blessing of Abraham may now come upon the Gentiles. Some, to prove that this privilege is now repealed, and that infants are cut off from the church by the gospel, bring Matth. iii. 8, 9. “Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Upon this I would make the following observations.

1. The infants of believers are here either intended, or not intended. If infants are not spoken of in this place, it is nothing to the purpose, for which it is cited. But should any say, that the infants of believers are here intended, and are by this cut off from the church as well as others, it will also as certainly follow, according to verses 10—12. “That since they cannot bring forth fruit, they will also be hewn down, and cast into unquenchable fire.”

2. The truth is this, adult persons only are intended by John in this address. They are trees full grown, which must bring forth good fruit, or be excluded the church by the gospel, and be hewn down, and cast into unquenchable fire.—The Pharisees and Sadducees presumed that they had a good right to baptism, merely because they

were the natural seed of Abraham. But John shewed them, that under the gospel this would be of no avail to any adults, who do not bring forth good fruit. This implies what we contend for, that all who bring forth fruit meet for repentance, should, under the gospel, inherit the covenant-blessing of Father Abraham.

Others think that, what the apostle says, in his epistle to the Hebrews,* respecting God's making a new covenant and destroying the old, fully repeals the grant, command and promise for which we contend. But it will be evident to any one, at least to every impartial mind, who attentively reads this and the following chapter, that the apostle here refers only to the law given at Sinai, or the Jewish dispensation. This, we have proved, may be abolished, and the privileges which God had before granted his church, with the command by which they were enforced, remain unaffected. Whatever, in the Jewish dispensation, was designed by the old covenant, which was taken away, it could not disannul the covenant which was before confirmed in Christ, it could not so disannul it, as to make void any of the spiritual privileges and blessings. For these were before confirmed in Christ to believers.— (Gal. iii. 17.)

It also appears from this whole epistle, that the apostle was laboring to convince the Jews, that God's design in the abolition of the Sinaic economy, containing many costly, carnal, and bloody ordinances, and a worldly sanctuary, was to make way for the gospel dispensation, a dis-

* Hebrews viii. 7, 8, 9.

penfation which, inftead of contracting the bleffings and privileges of his dear people, fhould eftablifh them on a better foundation, with great additions, and fhould increafe their fpiritual bleffings in heavenly places in Chrift Jefus. Here certainly can be nothing like a repeal of the grant made to Abraham. It is worthy of particular notice, that in giving a view of the new covenant, the apoftle makes ufe of the fame expreffion which God ufed with Abraham. By this he doubtlefs intended to fhew, that the privileges granted to Abraham are confirmed and continued to believers under the gofpel.

But if the Abrahamic bleffing refpecting infants is confirmed and continued to believers under the gofpel, it is moft certain that the command alfo comes clothed with all the weight of the vafly fuperior light and grace which diftinguifh the gofpel difpenfation. We may, with much greater propriety, infift, that the Baptifts fhould point out a repeal of this command—that they fhould point out an exprefs prohibition of infant-baptifm in the New Teftament, with much greater propriety, I fay, than they can demand of us a new command for a privilege once granted to the church, a privilege always enjoyed before, and a privilege fo clearly eftablifhed and continued to believers under the gofpel. We cannot, we dare not give up this privilege of believers without fome exprefs warrant from God. An exprefs command from him is as neceffary to nullify, as to eftablifh a pofitive institution, to revoke as to grant a privilege to the church.—The Chriftian church thus underftood it, and

both circumcision and baptism were at first administered together even to the Gentiles, till circumcision was expressly prohibited by inspiration, and baptism alone established in the church, as the sign of the covenant, and seal of the righteousness of faith. But there is no prohibition of the privilege granted to the church, respecting their infant seed; it, therefore, remains to believers under the sanction of the divine command, and is sealed to them for their children in the ordinance of baptism. We have no necessity of a new command, since baptism is now the seal of the righteousness of that faith by which we become the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise. We might, with the greatest propriety, rest the controversy here, for the Baptists cannot shew any prohibition of this privilege in the sacred scriptures—believe and be baptized respects adult persons in the first instance, and their offspring through them, as is proved. If the grant is no where repealed, it is most certainly continued to believers under the gospel dispensation. But in addition to this, we think it is easy to shew, that this privilege is confirmed to believers in many places in the New Testament. We have shewn from scripture, that God did grant this privilege unto Abraham as the father of believers, and that he did command that infants should be received into the visible church with their parents, and enjoined, that the seal of the righteousness of faith be administered to them. When, therefore, we find the apostle declaring, that they who are of the faith are the children of Abraham,* that they are blessed with faithful Abraham,† that the bless-

* Gal. iii. 7. † Verse 9.

ing of Abraham is come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, (Gal. iii. 14.) and then declaring, in our text, that if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise; we must firmly believe that this Abrahamic privilege or blessing, as well as others, is confirmed to believers under the gospel dispensation.

The apostle, in his epistle to the Romans, affirms very clearly, by a striking similitude, that the Gentile believers were to enjoy, at least, the spiritual privileges and blessings granted to the Jewish church, Romans xi. 16, 17. "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and 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 among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree." For whether by the root is meant Jesus Christ, or Abraham, and by the olive-tree is understood the church, or the covenant, yet being grafted in by faith they partook of the root and fatness of the olive-tree.—This cannot be understood of the enjoyment of any thing short of the same spiritual privileges and blessings, of which the Jews were deprived. But the Jews once enjoyed this Abrahamic privilege respecting infants, and are now deprived of it by their unbelief. If Gentile believers, under the gospel, are cut off from the privilege of having their infant-offspring admitted with them into the visible church by baptism, then though they partake of the root, yet are they cut off from the fatness of the olive-tree—a consequence which is both unnatural and absurd. It is evidently contrary to the apostle's design; and it

greatly weakens, if not wholly destroys the force of his reasoning in this place. Our blessed Saviour very severely reprov'd those disciples who forbade that little children should be brought to him, that they might receive his blessing. On that occasion, he gave them a command, which may be considered as binding upon all his disciples. He replied, "suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for, said he, of such is the kingdom of God." Or, in other words, such as are brought to me by faith for my blessing, belong to my church, or kingdom on earth. The order which immediately follows respecting the admission of adult members into this kingdom, seems to favor this sense of the words, (Mark x. 14, 15.) This command also seems to be a plain confirmation of the former privilege granted to his people. Thus the apostle learned of Christ, and taught the Corinthians, (1 Cor. vii. 14. and onward) that if either parent was a believer, the children were, by God's appointment, set apart for him, or consecrated, as the word, translated holy, often signifies in the sacred oracles.

To bring the matter to a point—That the infant children of believers are to be baptized, is a necessary consequence of the propositions which have been already established. In whatever light we take them, either together or separately, it will clearly follow, that the infant children of believers are to be baptized. God granted unto Abraham, as the father of believers, that infants should be received into the visible church with their parents; and he also commanded that the seal of the righteousness of faith should be admi-

nistered unto them. But we have proved that this great privilege is, under the gospel, confirmed and continued to believers, consequently the infants of believers, under the gospel, are to be received into the visible church with their parents, and, by the command of God, must have the seal of the righteousness of faith given to them, which is the Christian circumcision or baptism.

1. God did grant unto Abraham, as the father of believers, that infants should be received into the visible church with their parents. All true believers, under the gospel, are Abraham's seed, and as his children they are the true heirs, in Christ, of this privilege, therefore, by the divine appointment, their infant children must be received into the visible church with them, and are to be circumcised with the circumcision of Christ; or, in other words, they must be baptized.

2. God commanded that the seal of the righteousness of faith should be administered to infants, who are received into the church with their parents. Circumcision was once this seal in the church, but, under the gospel, baptism is the seal of the righteousness of faith; therefore, by divine appointment, baptism must be administered to those infants, who are admitted into the church with their parents under the gospel dispensation.

3. The great privilege, that infant children should be received into the church with their parents, and have the sign of the covenant, the seal of the righteousness of faith, administered to them, is, under the gospel, confirmed and con-

tinued to believers. Hence it clearly follows, since baptism is the seal of the righteousness of faith, that when adult persons, upon their repentance and faith, are admitted into the gospel church, their infant children are to be received with them, and to be baptized. Thus the apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, in the application of that most successful sermon, applies the promise exactly to this purpose. He enforces on his affected audience the gospel call to repentance, faith and Christian baptism, by this inestimable privilege. (Acts iii. 19.) "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." It may not be improper here to take notice of some other passages of the sacred scriptures, which may be considered as direct proofs of infant baptism. The commission of our blessed Saviour on this point, claims our first attention, (Matt. xxviii. 19.) Though it is brought by the Baptists as an objection; yet, properly considered, I think it is so far from being in their favor, that it will afford a convincing proof of our doctrine to any person free from prepossessions.

1. The apostles were commanded to go out into all the world. Till then they had been confined to the Jews, and both circumcision and baptism were administered to those who embraced the gospel, and to their infants. There was not the least hint antecedent to this, that infants were to be excluded, but much to the contrary, as has been shewn. The apostles themselves did not know that it would be lawful for them to go out to the Gentiles; much less that infants, as

the Baptists assert, were to be cut off from this privilege in the gospel church. They were here commanded to teach all nations, and preach the gospel to every creature. It is probable that even the baptists do not imagine, that this immediately respects infants, as to the external teaching and preaching of the word, they being wholly incapable of this. But it certainly does some way respect them. The words are plain—The command is express—Go teach all nations—Go preach the gospel to every creature. Surely our Saviour, who so tenderly took the dear little ones into his gracious arms, who so affectionately blessed them, I say surely he did not forget them on this most interesting occasion—Surely he was not ignorant of the tender feelings—Surely he was not a stranger to the pious breathings of the parental heart of his dear people in ages past. On this occasion, when the life of a thousand poor Ishmaelites was at stake, he had not forgotten the burst of Abraham's fatherly heart, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Gen. xvii. 18.) Nor was the compassionate Saviour insensible to those pious parental desires of true believers towards their infant offspring through all future ages. Much less can any suppose, that he excludes them from the race of intelligent creatures, to whom the apostles were to preach the gospel. We must either deny that they are part of all nations—we must also either deny that they are rational creatures, or we must suppose that they are some how included in the apostles mission.

2. The apostles are hereby commanded, to teach (*matheteusate*) to disciple all nations, and

preach the gospel to every creature. Since then it is certain, that the teaching and preaching of the gospel does some way respect infants, I confess, upon the Baptist's plan, I am utterly at a loss how to understand it, unless it be wholly to exclude them from Christian baptism, from the church, and from heaven; and either to strike them out of existence all together, or to plunge them headlong into eternal damnation. But if we understand the commission in the plain and natural sense, according to the circumstances in which it was spoken, as an honest, pious Jew would take it, and as it is clear the apostles understood it, the whole matter is plain. The teaching and preaching of the gospel, were to disciple infants by baptism with their believing parents, as had been a common known custom among the Jews, when they profelyted a heathen to the true religion.

The commission was express—It was very easy to be understood by those to whom it was given—Since they were well acquainted with the command by which infants were to be received into the church with their parents—since they knew this had always been the practice—and since they had never heard any thing to the contrary drop from the blessed lips of their divine master, but much in favor of such little ones, was it possible for them to understand it in such a manner, as to exclude the infants of believers from the church and from baptism?

Upon the whole, it is with me beyond all doubt that the apostles so understood their blessed master, as fully to warrant and oblige them to re-

ceive infants into the visible church with their believing parents, and baptize them. Agreeably to this they practised, when it is said that Lydia and her household were baptized—when the jailor and all his were baptized, and when Paul baptized the house of Stephanus, &c. It thus continued, no doubt, through the apostolic age; and from the best account we have in history infant-baptism was generally, if not universally, practised in the church more than twelve hundred years, though much corrupted. Notwithstanding some have since called it in question, yet, through all this long space of time, there was no church or society of Christians which denied infant-baptism, except those who denied all baptism with water. We have a particular authentic history, both of the first rise and progress of this sect that denied infant-baptism. It first appeared in Germany at the place called Munster, soon after the reformation from Popery.

If we grant, as the Baptists assert, that infant-baptism was neither allowed nor practised by the church in the apostolic age, it is utterly impossible that it should have been introduced in any subsequent period of the church. They, therefore, might as well assert that it never has been practised.

Let us now candidly examine this matter.—Some confidently affirm, that this practice was first introduced into the church in the dark days of Popery. This cannot possibly be true. It is easy to shew from the most authentic writers in those times, that it was practised in the church

long before; and, if I mistake not, some of the Baptist writers themselves allow that it was practised in the African church before the *dark period of Popery*. But be this as it may, it was not then first introduced into the church. If it was not the practice in the apostles' day, it must have begun in some of the succeeding ages before Popery.—It is generally allowed that it commonly prevailed through all the churches after the fourth century. Mr. Tombs, on the part of the Baptists,* expressly says, that St. Austin's authority carried it in the following ages almost without control; but St. Austin most solemnly professes, that he never heard of any in his time that opposed infant-baptism. We have only the four first centuries to examine. We are certain that the practice was first begun in one of them. Let us, therefore, go back and see if we can possibly find when it was first introduced into the church.—Our brethren, the Baptists, are, with us, equally interested in this inquiry. St. Austin, who lived in the fourth century, speaks of it as prevailing in his day; and that it was not decreed by any council, but had been ever in use. The same author, in his dispute with the Pelagians about original sin, brings infant-baptism as an unanswerable proof of original corruption. This was about A. D. 390. We also have a number of writers through the whole of this century, who speak of infant-baptism, but say nothing of its introduction. As Siricius, A. D. 384, St. Ambrose 374, Greg. Nazianzen 360, Optatus 306, the Council of Elibrius 305, and many others, mention infant-baptism as a thing in common

* Part I, Section 3.

use in the church. Thus, we see, it was not first introduced in the fourth century.*

In the third Century, there are several remarkable testimonies concerning infant-baptism, which make it very evident that it was not first introduced in that day. About the middle of this century Cyprian called a council of sixty-six ministers or bishops on this question, "Whether infants might be baptized before they were eight days old?" This council unanimously agreed, there was no necessity for such a delay. In consequence of this, a letter, which was signed by Cyprian, was written to the churches, to notify to them the result of their deliberation.

Origen, who was born less than an hundred years after the apostles, and flourished in the beginning of this century, speaks often of infant-baptism in his Homilies on Original Sin, as an established practice in the church. In one place he expressly says, that the church had a traditional order from the apostles to give baptism to infants. This clearly shews, that infant-baptism was then an usage in the church. Tertullian also, who lived about the same time, mentions infant-baptism as no novelty in his day. He pleads for the delaying of the baptism of infants on account only of the danger which might attend the introduction of sponsors. This can properly apply only in those cases, where parents were unbelievers, or were sick. Jacob Pamelius observes, in his Annotations on this place, that Ter-

* History of Infant Baptism, part 1, chap. 7, 8, to the 23. Dr. Forbafius Hist. Theology.

tullian had reference to such.* From these observations, it is clear that infant-baptism was not first introduced either in the third or fourth century. It certainly was not introduced in the fourth, because we find it in the third—neither in the third, because it is there spoken of as a common undisputed practice. Our inquiry is now reduced to the limits only of two centuries, and it is clear to me, that infant-baptism must have been introduced into the Christian church in one or the other. Let us now carefully examine the matter with respect to the second century, the age that immediately followed the apostles and first ministers of Jesus Christ.

All the immediate successors of the apostles must personally know, what was the practice of the apostles themselves. The churches also must know whether their infants were baptized or not. If the ministers and churches knew that infant-baptism had never been practiced by the apostles, it is utterly impossible that it should then have been introduced into the church without making great disturbance. It must have met with the greatest opposition, both from the ministers and churches, of primitive zeal and purity. Were that fact, is it credible that we should not have heard something of it, when some of the writings of those Fathers have come down to us?—Two of them are frequently mentioned on this subject, but not a word that there was any controversy in the church respecting infant-baptism. Ireneus, who flourished about the middle of this century, was acquainted with Polycarp, St. John's

* Dr. Forbesius' Hist. Theology.

disciple, and also saw and conversed with those who had seen Jesus Christ. He mentioned infant-baptism as no matter of dispute. Reckoning up several sorts of persons who were born again unto God, he expressly mentioned infants among them. It is naturally supposed that he there must mean their being born of the water, or baptized, as many of the Fathers used the word in this sense, as infants could give evidence of no other regeneration.

Justin Martyr, who is supposed to have been born about thirty years after the death of our blessed Saviour, in his Apology, written in the year 140, mentions persons who were discipled to Christ in infancy. He also speaks of baptism's being to us instead of circumcision. Ignatius lived in the end of the first century. He conversed with the apostles, and suffered martyrdom under Trajan, A. D. 107.* But from none of these have we a word respecting the first rise of infant-baptism in their day. Since we have now pursued our inquiry back to the first century without success, I would just make one remark here on the whole. If infant-baptism is such a gross error and corruption—if its introduction destroys the very being of the church; it is utterly incredible, if not impossible, that the practice of it could have obtained, either in the second, third, or fourth centuries, without its rise and progress being mentioned, or even that there were ever such heretics in the world. This remark obtains great weight when we consider that St. Austin, in the close of the fourth centu-

* Dr. Forbcus' Hist. Theology.

ry, wrote a book, giving a particular account of all sects that were, or ever had been in the church —(he enumerates eighty-eight with their several tenets.)—And when we find, in the writings of the Fathers, an account of all the particular errors, and smallest departures from the faith and practice once established in the church, we are reduced to this dilemma, either that infant-baptism was introduced into the church in the first century by the apostles themselves, or that it never has been practised in any age of the world.—The latter is contrary to known fact. The former is the truth, and it is the very doctrine proposed to be illustrated and established by this discourse. I shall now conclude with a few remarks.

1. We have both scripture command and example, for receiving infants of believers into the visible church with their parents, and for administering to them the seal of the righteousness of faith. This command and this example from Abraham the father of the faithful, evidently run through the whole of the Old and New-Testaments. When Christ came and fulfilled the law and the prophets, he confirmed the covenant of promise, he enlarged it with greater privileges, and he continued it to believers under the glorious gospel, as examples of infant-baptism. We also have the evident practice of all the churches of Christ in ages of the greatest zeal and purity. Those who deny that there is either command or example for this practice, ought first to point out from authentic history, a church or society of Christians, within twelve hundred years of the apostles, who did not practise infant-baptism,

2. Those who deny infant-baptism have no just ground for breaking off from all the churches of Christ on this account; and much less for esteeming themselves the only true church in the world. For though they hold this to be an error, yet it is not such as to subvert the foundation, nor indeed has it always been their sentiments, as appears by a confession of the faith of a hundred churches of their communion.* Awful have been the consequences of this separation, and, perhaps, nothing tarnished the glory of the reformation from Popery more than the conduct of its first founders. Those, therefore, who, in the present day would break off from other churches of Christ and join this separate communion, ought first well to consider the nature of the action, lest they be involved in the awful guilt of many generations. On the whole, it is high time that all party-zeal was banished from the church of Christ, and that all denominations were united in the common cause. The day of the Lord is at hand. In the mean time, let us give up ourselves and all ours to God and to his disposal—Let us take hold of the covenant through Jesus Christ, and thankfully enjoy the privileges—Let us plead the promises for ourselves and our children—and finally, let us wait patiently for his coming and kingdom, who will then reveal his righteous judgment, and reward every man according to his works.

* Printed in London, 1699.

S E R M O N IV.

BELIEVERS AND THEIR OFFSPRING IN COVENANT WITH GOD.

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.*

IN the former part of this chapter, we have an account of that wonderful out-pouring of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost. In the context we have Peter's solemn address to the mixed multitude, collected together on that occasion, in which the apostle proves to them that Jesus Christ, whom they had taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain, was the Son of God, the true Messiah and Saviour of the world. And he solemnly testifies that God had raised him from the dead, and had exalted *him* at his right hand, whose blood they had impiously imprecated on themselves, and on their children. Under a sense of this guilt they were pricked to the heart, and, under awful apprehensions of the divine wrath, in agonies of distress they cried out, men, brethren, what *shall* we do? The apostle then called them to repent of their sins—to embrace the gospel, and to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, as the only way to

escape the divine wrath, which was coming on that wicked generation, and as the only way to enjoy the blessings and privileges of the gospel-dispensation. This call they enforced by the weighty argument in our text. “ 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.”

It is generally supposed that this declaration respects both Jews and Gentiles. The promise is to you, and to your children. This respects those who were of the Jewish religion. The promise is to them who are afar off, when God shall call them, and to their children. This is supposed to have reference to the Gentiles, who should also be gathered into the church by the gospel, and should then enjoy the blessings and privileges of the covenant of promise with God's people.

We have seen in the preceding discourse, that all who believe are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise; and that, by divine appointment, the infant children of such are to be received with their parents, and to be baptized. But it has been asked, what advantage is this to parents, or to their children? To give an answer to this question shall be the subject of my present discourse. I shall, therefore, now endeavor, by divine assistance, to shew,

I. What the covenant of promise contains for believing parents with respect to themselves.

II. What it contains for them with respect to their children.

III. Shew how parents may have an interest in this covenant, and enjoy its peculiar blessings and privileges for themselves, and for their children.

1. Under this head I do not propose to speak of those blessings which are common to believers in general, but only of those which are peculiar to them as parents. It is highly reasonable to suppose, that as they have a peculiar trust and charge, they also should have special assistance, and particular blessings and privileges. The apostle says, they are blessed with faithful Abraham. Believing parents being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, have not only their sins forgiven; they have not only God for their God, for their father and portion—they have not only Jesus Christ for their Saviour, the Holy Spirit for their Sanctifier; but, in the first place, they also have the great privilege, that their infant children should be considered as in covenant with them. That this is a great privilege, every parental feeling is ready to acknowledge. It was before proved and illustrated, that under every dispensation of the covenant, this has been granted to believing parents, as God said to Abraham, the father of believers, “I will be a God to thee “and to thy seed after thee.”

It must certainly be considered as a great favor to the parent, that the great and good God should thus graciously mention their infant-offspring in the covenant with them. By this he

doubtless intended to shew his condescending grace and mercy to his people, that they might be encouraged in the faithful discharge of their important trust.

2. The covenant of promise, as has been proved in the former discourse, contains, for believing parents, the privilege of giving up their children to God in baptism, through Jesus Christ.— This is a great favor in every respect, but especially, that by faith believers may thus bring their infants to the compassionate Saviour for his blessing—the Saviour who is ever present in his ordinances. When thus given to him, they may always with freedom, in their prayers, bring them to the throne of free covenant-grace and mercy; they may, with hope, commit them to God's fatherly care; and they may, by faith, take hold of the covenant of his own appointment, and plead its blessings for them, as for their own souls.

3. Another privilege this promise contains for parents is, that their children, in their infant and most helpless state, may be, with them, members of the church. They may here consider them, in a peculiar sense, not their own, but the children of the household of faith. They may consider them the Lord's property, and that they are to be brought up for him. These reflections will not only strengthen all their obligations, but also greatly sweeten all their care and labor. They afford, to believing parents, a sovereign balm for all their wounds, and a sweet cordial for all their fears respecting their dear infant-children. How wonderful are the condescending grace and good-

ness of God to his dear people! But how vile the ingratitude and unbelief of the human heart!

4. This promise contains, for believing parents, all needed wisdom and grace to bring their offspring up for God, while he continues them under their care. How often do parents find their strength fail in trying circumstances respecting them even in their infant-state? But what a blessing have they in the covenant! Here is strength and assistance; and, indeed, they never fail of obtaining a recruit when they come here by faith. In the riper years of their children how often do they find that they lack both wisdom and grace to give them instruction, to restrain them from evil practices, and to bring them up for God? But here is both grace and wisdom in store. Here they may come freely by faith, and obtain mercy, wisdom and grace to help in every time of need. God says, in the covenant of promise, I will be a God to thee, O believing parent! The promise is to thee in the character of a parent, and contains every blessing and grace necessary for the education of your children, who are devoted to his service. These blessings are treasured up in Christ to be communicated to all those parents, who come to God for them by faith—by that faith which takes hold of the covenant—which works by love, and is productive of new obedience. Ignorant and unbelieving parents may think lightly of all these blessings, but they must certainly be exceeding precious to him, who has been made sensible what it is to be without God in the world—to him who is sensible what it is to have a covenant-God and father through Jesus Christ, and to him who knows what

it is by faith to plead the precious promises for his own soul.—How supporting to the tender, faithful, parental heart, when ready to sink under a view of the many evils which are thickly scattered in the vale of tears, through which their dear child must pass! How supporting, I say, are these covenant-bleffings, especially when parents can take hold of the covenant, and, by faith, obtain grace to instruct, warn, and guard their children, and thus cheerfully commit them to the holy keeping and disposal of a heavenly father.

5. In this promise there is abundant mercy to make their prayers, instructions and corrections effectual. Here is not only grace to make them faithful, but mercy to render them successful.—Pious parents, when they consider the total depravity of the human heart—when they see that the imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, and only evil continually, and when, upon a small trial, they perceive the obstinacy of their children, then they are exceedingly apt to be discouraged. But the promise contains grace sovereign and powerful enough to subdue the most stubborn will, and to break the hardest heart.—Here is mercy sufficient to make the weak, but faithful and persevering endeavors of pious parents successful, on the most finished piece of human corruption.—God says, “I know Abraham, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they *shall* keep the way of the Lord—Gen. xviii. 19. Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he *will* not depart from it”—Prov. xxii. 6. The Lord

himself answers for the event. To this source fainting believers ought always to look. Faithful parents, who have given their children to God in covenant, may undoubtedly depend on the all-sufficient mercy of a covenant-keeping God. Is this no advantage to parents? Is there no peculiar blessing for them who have given up themselves and their children to God in covenant? Is there no suitable encouragement—no particular assistance for them in this covenant, which is so well ordered in all things and sure?—But here let me observe, that as these covenant-blessings are spiritual—the spiritual person only can enjoy them. They are so little attended to and understood, and so little believed even by pious people in the present day, that we need not wonder they have so little apparent effect; and especially when so few parents take hold of the covenant truly by faith, and are active and diligent in the use of all those means by which God communicates the covenanted-blessings to his people.

Sixthly, and lastly—Should it please God to take away the infants of believers by death, the promise gives them full liberty, by faith, to commit, through Jesus Christ, their infants, as their own souls, into their heavenly Father's hands.—To this great privilege they are undoubted heirs, as children of Abraham. No favor, perhaps, could be more grateful to the feelings, no blessing more suitable to the desires, and no privilege could more exactly correspond, than this, with the wishes of a pious parent, in such an affecting situation. O parent! behold the grace and con-

descending goodness of a covenant-God and Father.

II. I am to shew, what are the promises and blessings contained in this covenant, for believing parents, respecting their children.

First—In their infant and most helpless state, they are admitted into Christ's family on earth—This is no small privilege. How great would you think the favor to your children, to be taken into the family of an earthly king? But the church is the household of faith, the family of the king of kings. Here are the richest promises, and greatest blessings, and here is a foundation for the most sanguine expectations. In this situation they are interested in all the public prayers for the welfare of the church, and they ought to be always remembered in the private and secret petitions of all God's people.

Secondly—The God of Abraham is their God—The promise is to believing parents, and to their children. "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed." This is certainly an inestimable blessing of the covenant, which believers have for their infants. God, therefore, will preserve them through the dangers of their infant-state, or will take them to himself. All this is doubtless implied in his being their God. For if believers are, by the divine command, to give their infants to God, and they in obedience, do give them up to him as he hath appointed, will he not accept them? He certainly will, and through Jesus Christ, he doubtless becomes their God in life, agreeably to the tenor of the gracious cove-

nant. But to such as die in an infant-state, he is forever a God and portion. Thus only can this be an everlasting covenant respecting such, and in this view alone his mercy to them endureth forever. Those, therefore, who believe that the promise contains any thing respecting the infants of believers, who die in their infant state, can hardly doubt of its securing to them the saving blessings of the covenant in the eternal world. What blessings are here for the dying infants of believers? Blessings infinitely rich—infinitely free!—This is not a new sentiment—It was holden, and firmly believed by the most zealous and pious ancient fathers in the church.

Should these infants, on the contrary, live and advance to the state of childhood, there are still great blessings for them in this gracious covenant.

First—That grace, promised to believing parents to make them faithful, has some special reference to children in this state. If believing parents have grace to be faithful, this is a great blessing, not to parents only, but also in a very special manner to their children: It gives them the advantage of their faithful pious instruction.

Secondly—Believing parents, respecting their children in this state, have the promise of the blessing to attend faithful instruction and discipline. Prov. xxii. 6—xxiii. 13, 14—xx. 7. “Train up a
“ child in the way he should go, and when he is
“ old he *will not* depart from it—Withhold not
“ correction from the child; for if thou beatest him
“ with a rod, he *shall not* die—Thou shalt beat him
“ with the rod, and *shall deliver* his soul from hell

“ The just man walketh in his integrity; *his children*
 “ *are blessed* after him.” What precious promises!
 What unspeakable blessings for their children!
 If God graciously grants his blessing to attend
 the faithful care of pious parents, this will cer-
 tainly make it effectual, and lay a glorious foun-
 dation for their children’s *usefulness* here, and for
 their eternal felicity in the world to come. This
 has often been the case, and it is more than pro-
 bable always will be the case, where parents take
 hold of the covenant, and are perseveringly faith-
 ful in their instruction and discipline towards
 their children, agreeably to the following pas-
 sages of sacred scripture.—“ And I will establish
 “ my covenant between me and thee, and thy
 “ seed after thee, in their generations for an e-
 “ verlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee,
 “ and to thy seed after thee. For I know him,
 “ that he will command his children, and his
 “ household after him, and they *shall* keep the
 “ way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment,
 “ *that* the Lord *may bring* upon Abraham that
 “ which he hath spoken of him”—Gen. xvii. 7.
 and xviii. 19. “ So then they which be of faith
 “ are blessed with faithful Abraham. That the
 “ blessing of Abraham might come on the Gen-
 “ tiles through Jesus Christ, that we might re-
 “ ceive the promise of the spirit through faith”—
 Gal. iii. 9—14. “ For I the Lord love judgment,
 “ I hate robbery for burnt-offering; and *I will*
 “ direct their work in truth, and *I will* make an
 “ everlasting covenant with them; and *their seed*
 “ *shall be known* among the Gentiles, and *their*
 “ *offspring* among the people: all that see *them*
 “ *shall* acknowledge *them*, that *they are* the seed

“ *which the Lord hath blessed. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.*” Isaiah lxi. 8, 9. and lxxv. 23.

Thirdly—In this state the children of believers, in covenant, are also under the care, watch, and discipline of the church. This also is no small privilege. And where the church is faithful, it most certainly is a very great blessing; not only as a powerful incitement to faithfulness in parents, but also as it adds great weight to their parental instruction and discipline.

In this age, human nature is capable of the most deep and lasting impressions. The foundation of a future life of virtue or vice, and consequently of happiness or misery, is much oftener laid in childhood than is generally imagined.—In this age, therefore, to have our children under the care, watch, and discipline of the church—under the faithful instruction of pious parents, attended with divine assistance and blessing, must be considered, by every serious and enlightened mind, as advantages unspeakably great—as privileges most important and precious.

Fourthly—In childhood also they have a special interest in the prayers of the church and people of God. As members with their parents, they are included in all the prayers which are made for the church throughout the whole world. How great an advantage this may be none can tell. When we consider, that God is pleased to bestow the greatest blessings in answer to the prayers of his dear people; and when we confi-

der, that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much, (James v. 16.) we must consider this is no small privilege.

In adult age there are still peculiar privileges and blessings for the children of believers, unless they have cut themselves off by their wickedness, or have been excluded by the discipline of the church.

Though the ax is now laid at the root of the tree, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit must finally be hewn down; and though something more is required of them, as adults, that they may enjoy all the privileges of the church, yet they are still under the care and discipline of the church. This is undoubtedly a great privilege, and if properly and faithfully exercised over such by the church, may actually be to them, under divine influence, one of the greatest blessings. They are under the bonds of the covenant—the sacred ties are still upon them to be the Lord's—the way of sin is more hedged up from such, and the way to final destruction more barred. These are no small advantages.—Such still have a special interest in the prayers of the church and people of God, which may, and will prevail, unless obstinately rejected and despised. They must be under great advantages for eternal life. Thus lifted up to heaven, in point of privilege, if they perish, they must dissolve every sacred tie—break through every barrier; they must burst asunder every band, and obstinately plunge themselves headlong into remediless destruction. These, my brethren, are some of the inestimable blessings and privileges of the covenant of promise, in which believing

parents, for themselves, and for their children, are interested. Surely they cannot be considered either few, or small, by any serious mind; on the contrary, I am persuaded that, what advantage is the covenant of promise? and what profit is their in baptism? would never have been questions had ministers always been faithful in dispensing the privilege, and had parents and churches discharged their respective obligations.

It is, indeed, a melancholy truth, that in the present day, the visibility of the peculiar blessings of the covenant of promise have almost disappeared. To this, perhaps, more than to anything else, it may be attributed, that so many parents, who hold to the covenant, are so easy in the neglect of baptism for their children; and also, that so many wholly deny infant-baptism. Had the administration of infant-baptism never been corrupted—had the church kept up the primitive discipline over both parents and children; and especially, had parents always been faithful to their children, according to the covenant, we have the greatest assurance, that all the peculiar covenant-blessings would have been enjoyed by believers and their children. The world would then have known that these are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

III. I am now to shew how parents may be interested in the covenant of promise, and enjoy the peculiar blessings and privileges of it, for themselves, and their children.

Two things here are the subject of inquiry—
1. How parents may be interested in the co-

venant of promise. 2. How they may enjoy the peculiar blessings and privileges of the covenant respecting themselves and their children, under the gospel dispensation.

With respect to the first, it is clear from what has been said, that parents must be true believers in order to be interested in the covenant; or in scripture language, they must be Christ's, and consequently Abraham's seed, to be heirs according to the promise. The apostle says expressly, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." Romans viii. 9.—Therefore he is not interested in the covenant of promise, and can have no right to its privileges.

But how parents, under the gospel, may enjoy all the peculiar blessings and privileges of such, for themselves, and for their children, must now have a more particular discussion.

Some, through ignorance and unbelief, reject and despise them. Many acknowledge the covenant, and have their children baptized, and yet do not appear to enjoy any of its spiritual blessings: And some, who are interested in the covenant, and appear really to give up their children to God in baptism, yet seem to lose the parental blessing. Parents need all these promises and blessings—they are treasured up in Christ for them—they are clearly proposed, and freely offered to them, in the covenant of promise. But O how affecting! How distressing must it be to miss of them, whatever may be the cause!

To illustrate this matter, I would suggest a few things.—Parents, I beseech you, give your most

serious attention—look to God for his blessing, and may the Father of light give you understanding. To give yourselves and your children to God, and to his church, in covenant, through Jesus Christ, is necessary, in order to have an interest in the covenant.—Covenant-blessings are given in a covenant way.

First—To insure the enjoyment of these blessings, parents must believe, and take hold of the covenant. Not to believe is, perhaps, in God's view, to reject the covenant—Not to take hold of it, and depend upon it, is probably to slight the covenant with all its blessings. This, perhaps, may be the very reason, why so few parents enjoy these peculiar parental blessings. It is highly reasonable, and it is agreeable to the analogy of faith, to suppose, that when God makes gracious proposals to parents, and they believe them, take hold and depend upon them, as proposed, that the blessings are sure, and the enjoyment certain.

Secondly—Let parents go to God as to a father, through Christ, and ask these covenant-blessings—let this be a continual fervent prayer. It is reasonable, and, in some respects, it seems necessary to the very enjoyment of them, that parents should ask these blessings of their heavenly Father. “Ask,” says the blessed Saviour, “and ye shall receive”. The apostle James says, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.”—If parents, therefore, are so ignorant of the covenant, and

so faithless respecting its blessings, that they do not ask for them, it is no wonder that they fail of their enjoyment.

Thirdly—Let parents be faithful to the covenant respecting their children, in training them up in the way they should go, and in bringing them up for God, agreeably to his will. This is of the last importance, and seems to be a condition of the enjoyment of covenant-blessings respecting their children. Parents, who are not faithful in this, do break the covenant. They make light of the promise, and thus lose the blessing. But, on the other hand, those parents, who are faithful, and bring up their children for God, agreeably to the tenor of the covenant, may depend on the enjoyment of the blessings in their fullest extent, with regard both to themselves and their children, and with regard to time and eternity. Should any say, that this is carrying the matter too far, and that, by proving too much, we overset the whole, and prove nothing. Should any say, that the faithfulness necessary to obtain this, is wholly unattainable in this imperfect state. I answer, that the objection is very plausible, and probably, with some, has more weight than merit. But let us try its weight in a similar case. According to scripture the Christian must be faithful in order to enjoy the covenant-blessing for his own soul. For the unfaithful will doubtless be shut out.—But how is this? Can a believer in this imperfect state be so faithful with respect to the covenant, as to ensure for himself the promised blessings for time and eternity? And why not in the case before us? es-

pecially as we have no reason to suppose, that here a greater perfection of faithfulness is required.

IMPROVEMENT.—1. We learn the duty of parents, under the gospel, respecting their children. This is, in general, to secure the covenant- blessings for them, by giving them to God in baptism, and bringing them up for him in the gospel-way. To this, parents, the gospel invites you in our text: “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 church says come—Ministers call upon you to become heirs according to the covenant of promise—to be faithful, and insure the peculiar, parental blessings for yourselves and for your dear offspring. But to be more particular—It is your duty, when your children are thus given up to God, to consider them his, and to take the most tender care of them for him in their infant state. You ought to pray for them, and particularly by faith to take hold of the covenant, and ask for them, and for yourselves, the peculiar parental blessings. When they are capable of instruction, you are bound, by the most solemn ties, carefully and perseveringly to teach them the will of God, their heavenly Father. You are to continue in prayer both with, and for them.—It is your duty constantly to set before them good examples in all godliness and holiness. It is your duty, as parents, to restrain them from wicked ways—from wicked company, and from all dangerous and corrupting practices, however fashionable.—When necessary, you ought to use the rod of paternal correction, always remembering that there is in it a promised blessing. It is also

your duty to call, if necessary, upon the church for assistance to restrain and govern your children according to the scriptures. In all things you must look to God for his blessing.

2. The duty of children, especially of those who are given up to God—It is their duty to be the Lord's. But to be more particular—It is your duty, O ye little ones! the dear lambs of the flock—it is your duty to obey your parents in the Lord. God has put you under their care, and given them authority over you. You are bound to receive their instruction—to hearken to their counsel—to yield to their restraints, and obey their commands agreeably to his will. You are to be obedient to the calls and instructions of your minister—of your Christian friends, and of the church, always remembering your solemn obligations. It is your duty to renounce all the sinful pleasures and vanities of this world—the lust of the flesh, and the cause of the devil. You are under the most sacred obligations to give up yourselves to God, through Jesus Christ, to join the cause and people of God, and to devote yourselves to his interest and service for ever and ever.

I shall now conclude with a short address to parents and to children.

First—Let me speak a few words to those professing parents, who deny the covenant, and infant-baptism.—Let me, my brethren, most solemnly beseech you impartially and candidly to examine the sacred scriptures on this subject.—

With all meekness let me entreat you to attend, without prejudice, to what has been now offered to your consideration. You may be assured it comes from a friendly heart—a heart that ardently wishes well to you, and to your dear children, that you may have a large share in the peculiar parental blessings of the covenant of promise. Consider, if you err in this matter, what an affecting loss you must sustain, both as to yourselves and your dear offspring. Consider what encouragement, assistance and comfort you are deprived of as parents—what covenant-privileges and blessings for your dear little ones are lost for ever!—These you, as parents, ought to have received by faith, according to the covenant of promise, and secured to them for time and eternity. Be cordially willing to receive the truth, and may the Lord give you understanding, and to his name be all the glory.

Secondly—Let me address those who have given up themselves and their children to God in covenant. You, my dear brethren, are interested in this gracious covenant—here are treasures of good things—here are precious promises for you, and for your children. But can you be satisfied with the bare right without the enjoyment of the blessings? If you can, you are doubtless of those who have a name to live but are dead.—Ye drowsy parents, let me beseech you to awake! Consider what a price is put into your hands, and consider how much depends on your faithfulness! Do your dear little ones look to you for temporal blessings under God? Does your daily labor supply their wants?—In the covenant of promise God has made more ample provision for

their precious souls. He has given you much greater encouragement to labor, that you may obtain for them the meat which endureth to eternal life. The unfaithful parent is, in this respect, cruel like the ostrich.—But I would hope better things of you: Be faithful to the souls of your dear children, that you and they may enjoy the peculiar blessings of the covenant of promise, and be truly the seed of the blessed of the Lord.

Thirdly—To parents who have not given up themselves to God, nor their children in baptism.—You have heard of the covenant of promise, proposed to you freely, through Jesus Christ, with all its blessings; yet, alas! you neglect to comply. Can you be easy in this situation? Here are parental blessings—but where are your parental feelings? Tremble lest your children perish with you. It is true, they are not beyond the reach of uncovenanted mercy. But what will become of you, a faithless parent?—Never, never be easy in this awful situation—“Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; 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.”

Fourthly—To those children who have, from their infancy, been given up to God in baptism.—You, my dear children, have been set apart, in a peculiar manner, for God, who has been pleased to distinguish you from others in the covenant of promise. He has put you under great advantages to know, to love, to serve him, and to be happy for ever: He has graciously hedged

up from you the path of vice, and barred the broad way to destruction—and he has opened before you the path of virtue, and smoothed for you the narrow way of life and eternal happiness. My dear children, I now beseech you, know the God of your fathers: He is the best of beings—he is a good God—his favor is life, and blessed are they whom he blesteth: Let it be your first thing to seek the Lord—You have the greatest encouragement. If you seek him early, you shall find him. Remember you are under the strongest obligations to be his. Receive, I beseech you, the instructions and admonitions of those who are over you in the Lord—of those who earnestly pray for, and steadily seek your everlasting welfare:—Cheerfully obey your parents in the Lord;—you know not how often they bend their knees at the throne of grace, in agonies of prayer, for you. Remember—oh! do remember, as you grow up, that the ax is laid at the root of the tree. If, therefore, you do not bring forth good fruit you must certainly be cut down, and cast into everlasting fire. *But* if, after all, you grow up in wickedness, how great must be your guilt, and how aggravated all your sins?—Should any of you thus go on in sin with the wicked, and finally perish, certainly, in the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for the children of Sodom and Gomorrah than for you.

Lastly—One word to those children who are not given up to God in covenant by baptism.—Though your parents have not given up themselves, nor you, to God in covenant, and though you have no special interest in covenant-blessings and privileges, yet you are in a gospel land, and

have many advantages for eternal life. You have the calls—the offers and invitation of the gospel. You are called to give up yourselves to God through Jesus Christ. There is provision enough in the uncovenanted mercy of God. The door of mercy is open. If you repent and come to Christ he will receive you, while he rejects those wicked children who, though they are baptized, yet still go on in sin, and despise the God of their fathers. Be persuaded to seek the Lord—be not discouraged, for though you are now afar off, you may yet be brought nigh by the blood of Christ. The gospel is come to you. Now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation. The time is short—The day of grace may be soon over, and the day of wrath may quickly be at hand. Awake—fly from the wrath to come.—Lay hold on the blessed hope now set before you. Youth is a good time—It often is the only time, and it always is the best time to make your peace with God through Jesus Christ.—Come then—O now come! for all things are ready. The Spirit and the Bride say come: Let him that heareth say come—and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.—May the God of mercy bless his own word, and to his name be all the glory for ever and ever—AMEN.

F I N I S.

[Faint, illegible text from the reverse side of the page, appearing as bleed-through.]

ERRATA.—Page 1, line 2d from bottom, for *imformed*, read *informed*.
 —P. 6, l. 4, for *teach*, read *preach*—8 and 9 l. fame p. for *disciplined*, read *discipled*—P. 31, l. 2, for *there*, read *those*.
 ERRORS OF COPY.—Page 13, line 14 from bottom, for *improbable*, read *probable*.—P. 17, l. 14 from bottom, read, *the sinner is overwhelmed*.
 —P. 54, l. 12, read *Acts* ii. 38, 39, for *Acts* iii. 19.—P. 58, l. 2 from bottom, for *Eliberius*, read *Elibrius*.

the vicious dispositions which impel to such a conduct, that we are summoned to the duties of the day. For if government rests on the will of God; and if submission to it is the demand of reason and of revelation; there are no sins which should not be repented of, and no bad passions which should not be mortified, not only because of their effect on our condition in another world, but as they injure our civil interests in the present. And especially it follows, that we should deplore an increasing forgetfulness of God, which impairs the influence that ought to flow from a conviction of his presence, a reverence of his perfections, a sense of the obligation of his laws and an apprehension of his judgements. For these have been always the best cement of social life and the best security of public and of private rights; and can never suffer a loss of force, without a proportionate necessity of the arm of power, to accomplish what had been better done by law, by habit, and by affection.

If ever there was a time, when an extraordinary occasion has occurred, of being awake to such truths as these, it is the present; when a spirit has gone forth, which seeks the demolition of religious principle in every shape; and which glories in the opinion of its inutility, in reference to civil interests and duties. And altho' this licentious theory bears within itself the seeds of its destruction, in the mis-

chiefs to which it prompts ; yet it is impossible to calculate either the number or the weight of the calamities, of which it may be for a while the cause ; and which are therefore chargeable on the consciences of all those, who withdraw themselves from a religious profession and the practice of religious duties.

If indeed the delusive theory were to rest on its pretended evidence alone, we might hope to find a counterbalance to it, in the dictates of sober reason, in the authority of the wisest statesmen, and in the experience of past ages. But there has arisen before the astonished world a military despotism of a gigantic size, and republican in name, which patronises the licentious sentiment in the disaffected and the desperate of every country ; making it the engine of an ambition without bounds : and which acts by the novel expedients, of a benevolence that knows no pity ; of a patriotism that has no respect either to property or to person ; of a fraternity that prostrates the independence of nations, and gives them up to plunder ; and of boasted improvements in public law, which do away all the expedients of former ages, for the preventing, or the moderating of war. What will be the final result of this united force of hypocrisy and of power, time only can unfold. But it is easy to read the lesson written in it for the instruction of virtuous citizens ; on whom

it is an additional call to the love and the support of order and an adherence to the ground on which it rests ; viz. the will of God and the sanctions by which he sustains it in the expectation of a future life. Thus will they contribute to the killing of those seeds of discontent, disunion, faction and insurrection, against which we are instructed at this time to pray: And thus also will they assist in fortifying every heart and strengthening every hand against the desolating sword of hostile invaders, should it be brought within our borders.

And while we thus prepare by consideration and contrition against threatening dangers, let us not be forgetful of that other object of the appointment—gratitude to God, for what we enjoy of his undeserved mercies ; and especially for his continuing to us the blessings of a free constitution and an upright administration of its powers ; while so many of the nations are bowed down under an imperious domination, directed to the subjugation of them all. For although we have no directions in scripture to determine us, as to many questions on which wise and good men differ ; yet, for whatever civil benefits we undeniably enjoy we should be thankful to God, as well as for the other mercies of his providence. And indeed, if it be a duty to thank him for his sun and rain, for the returns of seed-time and harvest, and for the fruits of them conducive

to our well-being, much more should we confess his good providence, in that legal security of person and property, on which the enjoyment of the rest so much depends; and above all, for that religious freedom of worshipping him according to our consciences, which is not only in itself a most invaluable blessing, but connected with the advancement of every kind of knowledge, distinguishing man above the brutes.

In regard to different forms of government, men may think differently, according to their respective habits, tempers and education: But as to those other matters, which affect our daily happiness; and which promote, what the apostle mentions as the end of our praying for civil rulers, viz. "the leading of quiet and peaceable lives, in all Godliness and honesty;" it is difficult to conceive of a man's being indifferent to such properties of a free government, and yet that he should entertain a love of moral order and a kindness to his species. The object of government is human happiness: And all improvements which have been found to promote this, by curbing the passions, either of arbitrary rulers or of licentious people, are of the number of those "good gifts which come down from the father of lights."

That in the minds of our fellow-citizens in ge-

neral, there is an attachment to a government under which such benefits are enjoyed, we have recent evidence in the zeal with which a late public summons has been obeyed, and by which the objects of it have been carried into full effect. And while I see among you many, whom I welcome on their return from an expedition, honourable alike to the commonwealth and to themselves, I can refer to it, as an additional reason for rejoicing in a constitution, by which such a spirit has been excited, and for the sake of which such sacrifices have been made. Nevertheless, with all due value for the love of country thus manifested, I may predict, that it will not be permanent in its effects, unless in union with a sense of that great Being, by whose providence our public mercies have been bestowed, and under whose pleasure they are held. On the present occasion therefore in particular, let them be cherished with thankfulness; and let a preparation be made, for their being enjoyed with virtue: And let the solemnity be instrumental to the exciting in us of such devout sentiments and affections, as shall be to the divine praise and to our own benefit, in time and in eternity.

