

THE QUESTION ANSWERED,

Whose Children are entitled to Baptism?

A

SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

GENERAL SYNOD,

OF THE

REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH,

IN THE DUTCH CHURCH, IN GARDEN-STREET, NEW-YORK, ON THE

EVENING OF THE 6TH OF JUNE, 1816.

BY CORNELIUS C. CUYLER, A. M.

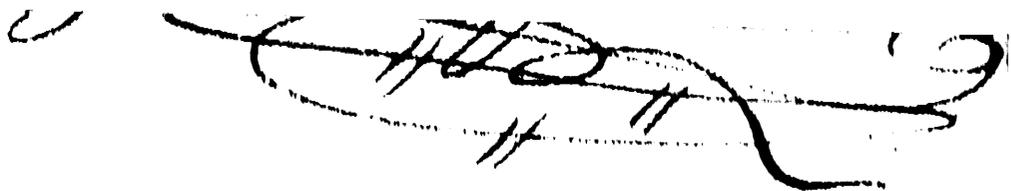
Pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church at Poughkeepsie.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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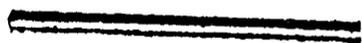
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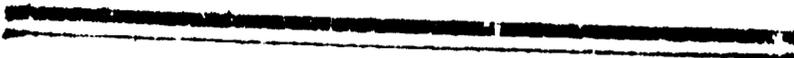


BY CORNELIUS C. CUYLER, A. M.

Pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church at Poughkeepsie.



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POUGHKEEPSIE :

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1816.

TO

The Rev. Dr. Jacob Brodhead,

PRESIDENT,

AND THE MEMBERS OF THE LATE

GENERAL SYNOD,

OF THE

REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH
IN NORTH AMERICA.

CONVENED IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK, ON THE
FIFTH DAY OF JUNE, 1816.

THE FOLLOWING
SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THEM, IS INSCRIBED, WITH SENTIMENTS
OF RESPECT AND AFFECTION, BY THEIR FRIEND,
AND SERVANT IN THE LORD,
THE AUTHOR.

A SERMON, &c.

I CORINTHIANS, VII. 14.

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

THE chapter, from which our text is taken, contains Paul's answers to several questions which had been proposed to him for solution, by the church at Corinth. These questions related to the subject of marriage, about which difficulties had arisen. Some of these difficulties, probably, arose from the times in which they lived, and others from the sentiments of their teachers. The questions which the Apostle answers, are substantially these: *Whether, circumstanced as christians were in those times of persecution, it was proper to marry? Should those who were married, both parties being believers, separate from each other? Was the marriage contract to be considered as valid, if one of the parties were an unbeliever?* The first and second questions were asked and answered with reference to the times in which they lived. The third probably arose from the practice of the Jewish church. (a)

a Neh. xiii. 27. Ezra ix. 2. x. 2.

In answering these questions, Paul sometimes represents himself as speaking by commandment from the Lord, and at others, as speaking by permission. From this some have taken occasion to suppose, that when he speaks by permission, or commands without referring immediately to divine authority, that the advice which he gives may be followed, or not followed, at the discretion of the person to whom it is given. The assumption is, however, perfectly gratuitous, and not warranted by the Apostle's language. The fact is this: When the Apostle represents himself as speaking by command, he speaks of that which had been previously decided, either in the old testament, or by Christ during his personal ministry; and when he uses a different phraseology, he, as an inspired apostle, commands, or gives advice by apostolical authority. An examination of the questions which he answers will prove this construction to be correct.

With respect to the first question—God himself had instituted marriage, and settled, not only its legality, but its propriety, when he said, “It is not good that the man should be alone.” (*b*) When Paul, therefore, gives advice dissuading from marriage, he does not so much as pretend to bind by commandment from the Lord, or, as making his advice in the case a rule of conduct which it would be sinful not to follow; but as one who had obtained mercy, he gives such advice as the times required. The advice was particularly appropriate for ministers of the gospel, at a time when they were the first

and peculiar victims of persecution. That they, or others under such circumstances should not marry, God had not commanded, nor did Paul; but being under the direction of the Holy Ghost, he gave his advice, which was doubtless according to the will of God, and profitable to the church.

In the second case, he says, "I command, yet not I, but the Lord." The reason of this language in this case is obvious. Our Lord Jesus Christ had already settled the point, that it was not lawful for those who were married to separate from each other, except on account of adultery.* There was, therefore, no room left for the exercise of discretion, either by him in giving advice, or by them in following it. The point had been previously determined by the highest authority.

In the third instance, he says, "To the rest speak I, not the Lord"—This relates to marriages *existing* between believers and unbelievers.† The children of Israel were not permitted to marry among the heathen. (c) Many, under an apprehension that this rule was intended for the people of God in all ages, and not for the Jews only, were straitened by it in relation to such marriages,

* Mat. v. 32.

† Marriages *existing* between believers and unbelievers. It is not intended to justify the contracting of such marriages. The apostle exhorts to the contrary in 2d Cor. vi. 14. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Contracting such marriages, we have no reason to expect the blessing of God on them. Separation, however, the marriage being contracted under such circumstances, would be unlawful. The validity of the marriage contract, *one of the parties becoming a believer* is had in view

c Lev. xxii. 12. Deut. vii. 3. Josh. xxiii. 12. Neh. xiii. 27. Ezra ix. 2 x. 2.

and asked Paul's advice. It not having been authoritatively determined, he gives, by direction of the spirit of God, the advice in our context, and his direction in relation to the case, is a rule for all ages. The whole scope of the chapter shews evidently that he acted by divine authority, and was competent to settle and establish rules in the church. If this be not the case, he was very much mistaken when he said in the last verse of the chapter, "I think also that I have the spirit of God."

The reason of the answer to the last question is contained in our text. The Corinthians had asked whether believers, being married to unbelievers, ought not to separate from them? He tells them, no, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." That is, the husband and wife are sanctified to each other for all the purposes for which marriage was instituted, notwithstanding the circumstance that one of the parties is a believer and the other an unbeliever, nor will the relation of the children to the church be, on that account altered; they shall not be accounted *unclean*, but be considered as *holy*, and be entitled to their privileges in the same manner as though both of their parents were believers. This was the generally received opinion in relation to this passage of holy writ in the first ages of the Christian

Church; (*d*) and in this opinion the ablest commentators subsequent to the reformation agree. (*e*)

The expressions, "Holy" and "Sanctified," are used to denote not only holiness of heart and life, but such a circumstantial or relative holiness as arises from the presence of the Lord, or from the dedication or consecration of any person or thing to God or his service. Thus, when Moses approached the burning bush, the Lord said, "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Hence also there was a place in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple which was called "The holy of holies." The children of Israel are frequently called *holy* as a people, not because they were *really* and *personally* holy, but because they were the Lord's covenant people, *solemnly devoted* to him. Their offerings were called *holy*, because they were *dedicated* to the Lord, and applied to a *holy purpose*. Even the firstlings of the flocks and herds were called *holy*, because they belonged to Jehovah for a religious and appointed use and purpose. "But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy." It is in such a sense that the infants of believers are called *holy*. They belong to the Lord—He claims them as his own. By his gracious appointment they are relatively in a holier and nearer relation to him than the children of unbelievers. They not only *may*, but they *must* be devoted to him, for they are *holy* to the Lord.

d Wall's hist. inf. bap. vol. i. p. 51, 123, 176.

e Hammond, Walker, Poole, Henry, McKnight, Beza, in loc.

This is evident from Jehovah's language to the children of Israel, when having charged them with offering their children to idols, he adds, "Thou hast slain my children." (*f*) This is the only scriptural sense in which they can with propriety be called *holy*, as God claims them for himself. As we *may* and *do* devote them to the Lord, the epithet is properly applied. It certainly relates neither to holiness of heart nor life; and the *new* notion, that it relates to their legitimacy is perfectly idle, and was never even dreamed of by the christian church till within two or three hundred years.

From these preliminary remarks two things are evident; *that the children of believers are related to the church of God, and not only may, but must be dedicated to him in the ordinance of baptism; and that this privilege arises from the faith of one, or both of their parents.* The first result will not now claim our attention; it is the second which I intend to discuss. The principal object had in view is to answer this question; *Whose children are entitled to baptism?* The answer furnished in our text is this; *those, and only those, one or both of whose parents are real believers.* The reality of their faith gives the title *before the Lord*; the credible profession of it *before the church.*

1. The truth of this proposition I shall establish by arguments drawn from the word of God.

2. Shew that the standards of this church admit and enforce it.

3. Answer the objections which are bro't against it. I am,

I. *To establish the truth of the proposition by arguments drawn from the word of God.*

The scriptures furnish various grounds of argument which have a bearing on the subject. My object shall be to select the most prominent and important.

The first argument shall be drawn, *from the identity of circumcision and baptism.* This identity is manifest, not only because they occupy the same place in the dispensations to which they respectively belong, and signify essentially the same thing; but because the apostle Paul considers them in this light, in the second chapter of his epistle to the Colossians. Assuming this identity then as a fact, (and it is a fact which all pedobaptist churches admit,) there is abundant proof that a profession of faith is necessary to the due administration of the ordinance of baptism under any circumstances, whether it be administered to adults or infants. Circumcision is declared to be "A seal of the righteousness of faith." Concerning Abraham it is said, "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 to them also." (g) His faith unquestionably embraced Christ and his righteousness, and he had by the sign an exhibition of them made to him, and a token, pledge, or

seal of them in the ordinance which he received. Without an utter perversion of the ordinance, we cannot suppose it was administered to his posterity upon any other ground than that upon which he received it. Nor is it any where intimated that it was. It must always, therefore, have retained its distinctive nature—We have, then a right to consider baptism as “a seal of the righteousness of faith.” It is such by divine appointment. Accordingly, when the ordinance is administered, whether to an adult or an infant, a confession of faith is taken, and a solemn pledge given to live to the glory of God. This appears to have been the apostolical practice, and the practice of all churches who have not wholly rejected the ordinance. Thus, on the day of Pentecost, the Jews were pricked in their hearts and said, “What shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (*h*) This evidently requires a credible declaration of faith in Christ, which is always included in repentance, and indeed presupposes it. This is also evident from the cases of Paul, Lydia, the Jailer, the Eunuch, and the Centurion; and it is more than questionable whether there be a single instance of baptism recorded in the scriptures, in relation to which such a course was not pursued. With this agree the standards and practice of the different churches down to the present

day. Now, although baptism is “a seal of the righteousness of faith,” it is not pretended that it is the infant’s faith which receives the seal, for the infant is admitted by all to be incapable of giving *us* any evidence of its faith. Nor can it be pretended with any degree of plausibility, that it is *exclusively* the faith of the church. The whole transaction has respect to the faith of the person who offers up a child to the Lord in this ordinance. The church is indeed bound to important duties. She pledges her prayers, her instruction, and her watchful care and attention. The person who offers up a child does the same. If faith be not necessary, why demand a confession of it? Why bind the offerer to the duties of faith? If faith be not necessary, there is a manifest impropriety in making the demand, and binding to the performance of the duties of faith. If, therefore, baptism be “a seal of the righteousness of faith,” it belongs of right to the children of the faithful. As infants, they, and *only they*, are entitled to it, and to be sealed with it.

The second argument which proves the truth of our position is derived from *the nature of the ordinance*. It is an ordinance of the covenant of grace. It is a divinely appointed seal of that covenant. In it we solemnly covenant with Jehovah. He exhibits himself as our God, the God of grace and reconciliation through Jesus Christ; and not only as *our* God, but also as the God of *our children*; and we profess to take him to be our God and saviour, and portion. We devote ourselves to his

service and glory. We take him to be our God, and the God of our seed. A more solemn transaction can hardly be imagined. This can never be done without faith, "For without faith it is impossible to please him." If there be no faith it is a mere mockery—it is trifling with God, and injuring ourselves. He that comes to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by him; and no man either *does* or *can* receive Christ but by faith. It is in this way, and only in this that God becomes *our* God. Through Christ alone can the Father be approached acceptably; can men enjoy his favor. Under any other circumstances He is a consuming fire. When we attempt to come in any other way, He may with propriety say to us "Forasmuch as this people draw near to me with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men, therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people; even a marvellous work, and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." (*i*)

In this ordinance we profess to worship God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in the most unequivocal manner. The nature of the ordinance supposes this. But what is the nature of the worship which we render when we neither know this God, nor intend to serve him? Which

no man does, or *can do*, who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is there any thing in the use of the ordinance without faith, which may with propriety be called worship? Or, on which we may hope for the blessing of God? Is it possible in the nature of the case, to keep the covenant in which we engage, without faith? Do the scriptures give us any reason to believe that God is the God in covenant of any other than believers? The Lord may well ask unbelievers, "Who hath required this at your hands?" Unbelief profanes the ordinance and brings additional guilt upon the soul. It mocks that God concerning whom it is said, *That He cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked.* It cannot be pleasing to him to have us set our hands to a covenant which our hearts deny. The participation of baptism without faith is a pretence to put the seal of God upon that which he does not acknowledge to be his. No where has he promised his blessing to such a proceeding; but we have reason to fear that his malediction will follow it. It may, therefore, be assumed as a gospel principle, that the nature of the ordinance requires faith in the parent who offers up his child to the Lord.

The third argument is derived from *the confessions and promises which are connected with the administration of the ordinance.* At this I have already hinted as the uniform practice of the apostles, and all churches which administer baptism, down to the present day. The offerer makes a confession of his faith, and pledges him-

self to perform certain duties; and in consequence of this the church commits to his care an infant member upon whom Jehovah has caused to be put the seal of his covenant. There is something in this transaction which supposes faith, and requires its exercise. The confession always embraces the leading and essential doctrines of the christian religion, and the duties stipulated to be performed, are the duties of faith. Without faith the confession is very lame and essentially defective. If it be not according to truth, it is hypocritical. Neither have we any reason to believe that the stipulated duties will be performed. The offerer promises to God and the church to bring up his child *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. In this promise he engages to instruct the child to the utmost of his power in those things which pertain to his everlasting welfare; to pray with him and for him; to set before him a Godly example; and to govern him on christian principles. This supposes faith. These duties cannot be acceptably and profitably performed without it; they never will be. We, therefore, deceive ourselves if we expect their performance. We certainly ought not to bind ourselves to what we do not intend to perform. That would be acting the part of the hypocrite. Nor ought we to bind ourselves to what we are unable to perform. That would be unwise, and perhaps dishonest. To say, that we promise only to the utmost of our power, is trifling, if we mean to excuse ourselves by it from any part of the duty to be per-

formed: That power is not to be limited by our inclinations, or prejudices, or slothfulness. It is the ability of a believer which is had in view; of one who accounts himself to be bought with a price, and who is willingly bound to glorify God with his body and spirit. If there be no faith, the confession is not true in fact, and the promise is worth just as much as the promise of a beggar to pay thousands when he is not worth units. The confession and promise, therefore, without faith are not only absurd, but impious. The baptism of the Eunuch by Philip illustrates my meaning. After conversing for some time with each other on what Isaiah in his fifty-third chapter says concerning Christ, "They came to a certain water; and the Eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest; and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (j.) From this case it is evident, that a refusal to confess his faith would have debarred him from the ordinance. Nor have we any reason to doubt that he bound himself to bring forth the fruits of faith in his life. It does then appear that the confession and promise made upon the administration of the ordinance, suppose and require faith.

The fourth argument may be drawn from this passage of holy writ—"The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, *but the answer of a good conscience*

toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (*k*) The apostle here plainly intimates, that baptism, in order to be properly and profitably administered, must be connected with the *answer of a good conscience*. It will hardly be contended that a *natural* conscience is a *good* one, or, that it is safe to depend upon its dictates. On the contrary, our natural consciences are apt to deceive us; apt to approve of what God disapproves, and to reject his counsel. Before our consciences can be *good*, they must be *purged from dead works to serve the living God*. This can be effected only by a believing application of the blood of Christ. This is the case when our understandings are *so* enlightened as to know the will of God; our wills *so* subdued as to be in subjection to his will; and our hearts *so* sanctified as to approve of his will. Then our consciences may be called *good*. Such a conscience supposes the existence of a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a conscience apprehends the risen redeemer as the only ground of hope and confidence, and, with uprightness, answers to the demand which he makes; “My son give me thy heart.” When this is not the case, baptism is the mere *washing away of the filth of the flesh*, and may be considered as that *bodily exercise which profiteth nothing*, or, as acting under the influence of that “custom and superstition” which our liturgy condemns. Without *the answer of a good conscience* we can have no hope that God is *our* God, and consequently can derive no comfort or benefit

from the participation of the ordinance. At all events, God does not promise to be *ours* or recognize us to be *his*; and if he be not *our's* and we *his*, can we be supposed to be within his covenant*? And, if we be not within his covenant, how can the seal of his covenant be with propriety applied to us? As to a covenant relation, the answer with respect to a believer is easy. The Lord has said "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." First, "a God to thee," because thou believest; and then, "to thy seed after thee," because they are thy seed, the seed of a believing parent. The conclusion is obvious, in order to a proper and profitable participation of the ordinance, whether we receive the seal in our own persons, or in the persons of our children, we must have, "the answer of a good conscience;" we must have faith. Then, and only then, can we hope to have the blessing of God upon the work of our hands.

The last argument to which I shall advert, is *founded on the uses of baptism*. God's institutions are all holy, wise and good. They all answer some important and useful end. He makes them all subservient to his own glory, and the good of his people. With respect to the

* God recognizes believers as being in covenant with him—They are *his* people, and he is *their* God. He has also been graciously pleased to recognize their seed. But when their seed deny or reject him, (which they do when they do not profess his name and religion at adult age,) they lose the relation, and *their* seed cannot claim the relation, or expect the benefit. In order to this a formal act of discipline is not necessary. The relation, before it can be personally claimed, must be formally recognized. A refusal to make this recognition, has, and ought to have, the effect of excluding.

uses of baptism, time does not permit me to enter into detail. There are, however, three to which I would direct your attention, as having a direct bearing on the question, which I am answering. It is used, *to distinguish believers and their seed, from unbelievers and their seed—As a token of the divine favor to believers and their seed;—and, To secure the christian education of the children of believers.* These uses are highly important, intimately connected with the declarative glory of God, and of vast moment for the promotion of the happiness of believers.

When the ordinance is administered to the infants of unbelievers, the distinction between the friends and the enemies of God, is lost. The precious and the vile are mixed together, contrary to the Lord's direction.—“Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” (1.) Such a proceeding would throw down the partition wall between the church and the world, and the garden of the Lord would become as the great common of the world, to be trodden under foot. It is, however, the Lord's intention that there should be a distinction. He puts a mark upon the sheep of his pasture, and the flock of his fold, by which they are to be known as his. By this ordinance they are properly distinguished.

I have said, that baptism is used as a token of the divine favor to believers and their seed. It makes to

them an exhibition of Gospel Grace, and gives them a sign and seal of their right to it. I refer to the (*m*)standards of this church as a confirmation of this sentiment,—

“When we are baptised in the name of the Father, God, the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil, or turn it to our profit: and when we are baptised in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that he doth wash us in his blood, of all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptised in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented, without spot or wrinkle, among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.” This token faith receives to its comfort; but this use is lost where there is no faith. Without faith, then, the use of the institution, as to individual comfort and benefit, is lost. In this respect the ordinance is a mere nullity to the unbeliever.

The institution is used to secure christian education. The Lord will have those upon whom he causes to be

put the seal of his covenant to be brought up for him. Our dedication to God in infancy is designed to have us trained up for his service, that we may do his will and live to his glory. God requires this, and so does the church; and all the promises which are made in baptism relate to this point. Christian education, however can be expected only from christians; and, when it is committed to other hands, it is hoped for in vain. Parents teach children their own sentiments, and lead them in their own ways. The believer will labor to bring up his children for God, and the more, because he has solemnly bound himself to do it. He who looks for it from another quarter, will certainly be disappointed. The intentions of the church, in this respect, ought to correspond with those of the Lord. Ought she not then to have a reasonable hope that her intentions shall be fulfilled, and her expectations in relation to her infant members be answered? Can she have these, if she have no satisfactory evidence of the faith of those to whom she commits her children? Do parents act an unwarrantable and guilty part, who do not, in every lawful and practicable way, seek to have their children well educated? to have them become wise and good? Would they not act this unwarrantable and guilty part, if they were to commit them to ignorant and wicked instructors? The church acts a similar part, in knowingly committing her children to incompetent and wicked hands. In fact, the children of unbelieving parents are not hers. But admit-

ting that they are, she makes herself a partner in the perjury of those who promise and do not perform, if she does not require such evidence of faith as, in the judgment of charity, is satisfactory. Whatever, therefore, the uses of baptism are, they are found by faith alone; they are lost to unbelief.* The direct conclusion from all the premises which have been examined, is, *that faith is necessary to the due administration of baptism: and by direct and necessary consequence, that the children of believers, and no others, are entitled to it.* This doctrine appears to be abundantly taught in the scriptures, and to be a standing law of Christ's kingdom—I proceed,

II, To shew, *That the standards of this church admit and enforce it.*

That the sentiment which has been stated is the sentiment of the Reformed Dutch Church is abundantly evident from her standards. In them, if anywhere, her opinions in relation to the doctrines and practices which are inculcated in the gospel, are taught; and by them, having adopted them, she is bound. To

* Because the beneficial effects which may reasonably be expected from this divine institution, as an institution of God, are not realized in all their extent—the Baptists are in the habit of saying, “There is no use in infant baptism.” The strength of their objection consists in the abuse of the ordinance. We have no right to expect a blessing when we do not use it according to the intentions of the law-giver. Let Pedobaptist churches wipe away this stain, and the objection will cease. It will then be manifest, that God is a covenant-keeping God throughout all generations. When the objectors shall see the blessing of God descending upon children's children, they will give up their opposition. This may be expected when our children are trained up by consistent believers.

these standards, in relation to this point, I now invite your attention. I have no doubt they will be found to be very definite and particular.

In the twenty-seventh Lord's day of the Heidelburgh catechism we are told, that *the infants of believers* must be admitted into the Christian Church, and be distinguished from *the infants of infidels*,* by this ordinance. In the thirty-fourth article of the confession of faith, the anabaptists are censured, because, "They condemn the baptism of *the infants of believers*, who we believe ought to be baptised and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised, upon the same promises which are made to our children. And indeed Christ shed his blood no less for the washing of *the children of the faithful* than for adult persons." The title of the form which we use in baptizing infants is also very explicit. "The form for the administration of baptism to infants of believers." In that same form baptism is substantially defined to be, "A seal of the righteousness of faith," and those who offer up their children are called, "Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ." In the canons, under the first head and seventeenth article it is said, "*The children of believers* are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of

* The word rendered "Infidels," is in the Dutch, *Ongeloozigen*, which is, in that language, used to denote *unbelievers*. Infidel must, therefore, be considered as synonymous with unbeliever. We have, therefore, no right to consider the expression as designating one who is, in the common acceptation of the word, an open rejecter of revealed religion, but all who are destitute of gospel faith.

grace, in which they, together with their parents, are comprehended." In the fifty-sixth article of the rules of church government it is said, "The covenant of God shall be sealed by baptism to *the infants of christians.*" In the form for the administration of baptism to adults we are told that, "*Children of christian parents* must be baptized by virtue of the covenant."

The language used in these quotations is very explicit. It is no easy matter to mistake its import. It would almost seem as if great pains had been taken to render it precise and definite. Faith is constantly considered as connected with the ordinance of baptism. Not a doubt is even intimated that the parent offering up a child in baptism is other than a believer. It is not so much as hinted that unbelievers can have the privilege of offering up their children in this solemn and holy ordinance. It would almost appear as if the framers of these standards had anticipated a day when lax sentiments and lax practice would creep in, and had made provision for it beforehand. At all events, they did not intend to countenance them in the most remote degree. The terms, "Christians, Believers, Faithful, Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ," are expressions which, beyond all controversy, denote the children of God. And when the church uses such language, she expresses a hope, that those whom she thus addresses, are such characters—and she more than intimates, that she possesses evidence upon which she has been satisfied of the fact. If these

things be not so, the standards of this church are both uncertain and equivocal. Instead of being an honest and plain declaration of her real sentiments, they are no better than a false light calculated to mislead and deceive. This, however, can hardly be expected to be the case with a church which was formed amid persecution and blood for the truth's sake. I shall presently shew that her standards are not of this equivocal character ; but that she has defined, with accuracy and precision, whom she intends by the expressions which she uses to designate characters. I consider the fact as conclusively established, that the standards of this church suppose and require faith in the parent who offers up his child in baptism ; such a faith as unites to the Lord Jesus Christ ; such a faith as embraces God as a covenant God.

Here a question of no common importance arises :— How is the church to be satisfied of the faith of those who desire to offer up their children in baptism ? This question is very important, and ought to receive a very definite answer. The answer to this question ought to regulate her practice. My short answer is, *She can be satisfied only by a credible profession*—Such a profession as recognizes and embraces her doctrines, and is corroborated by a corresponding walk and conversation. Less than this ought not to satisfy her. This is her *only* rule of judgment. Without this, one *individual* may be satisfied of the faith of another, and even *every individual* belonging to a church may be satisfied ; but the church, as an *or-*

ganized body, must in her *corporate* capacity receive a *credible profession*. When I speak of a credible profession, I mean such a profession as we demand of one whom we receive into the communion of the church, in which the professor gives evidence of vital piety, and binds himself, not only to live a decent and orderly life, but also to obey the laws of God's house. This is the only ground upon which the church, *as a church*, can proceed. Unless she thus proceeds she assumes an unwarrantable responsibility. By a contrary procedure this church would act inconsistently. I make this remark with a direct reference to the fourth question which is asked of an adult who offers up himself in baptism, "Dost thou assent to all the articles of the christian religion, as they are taught here in this christian church, according to the word of God, and purpose steadfastly to continue in the same doctrine to the end of thy life; and also dost thou reject all heresies and schisms, repugnant to this doctrine, and promise to persevere in the communion of our christian church, not only in the hearing of the word, but also in the use of the Lord's supper." This question we dare not pass over without a direct affirmative. The adult binds himself positively to obey the laws of God's house. Do we, or can we ask less than this from the parent who offers up his child? Would we accept that parent if the ordinance were to be administered to himself without these stipulations? If we did either, it would be subversive of all church gov-

ernment. Does the covenant in one case become a different thing from what it is in the other? This will hardly be pretended. Are not the stipulations in both cases essentially the same? Can a parent fulfil the obligations which he contracts in the baptism of his child without walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless? Are these obligations fulfilled without performing all the duties to which we are bound by a solemn profession of religion? Would not this church then be grossly inconsistent in baptizing a child when neither of its parents makes a credible profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Is she not in duty bound to ask such a profession, and to bind, in the most solemn manner, to such obedience?

In another case she takes precisely the method which has been suggested. Does a person, whether baptized in infancy or not, desire to become a communicant? How does she proceed to ascertain the faith of that person? She examines him—She requires a credible profession—a declaration of gospel faith and experience, and a solemn promise of obedience to all the laws of God's house. Less than this she would not, she ought not to accept. She asks such a profession, as in the judgment of charity she can believe. Were a person to claim an exemption from obedience to any of the laws of God's house, she not only might and would, but actually ought to refuse him. The church, in fact, knows the faith of *professors* only, and she knows their faith because they

have *professed* it.—because they have made a declaration of it, under such circumstances, and in such terms as has satisfied her. Other rule of judgment she has none. The same mode of proceeding, therefore, which keeps any from the Lord's table, ought to keep them from the ordinance of baptism. The blood of Christ is of the same nature whether we consider it as *cleansing the soul from sin*, as in the ordinance of baptism, or as *the true drink of life eternal*, as in the Lord's supper. Both baptism and the Lord's supper are sacraments in Christ's blood, and they belong *equally* and *only* to the faithful. Why are not all admitted to the Lord's supper? Because the church has received no satisfactory evidence of their ability *to discern the Lord's body*—because she has received no pledge of their obedience—They have made no credible profession—Than this, I know of no other method to ascertain their faith. Nor is it pretended that there is any other. Two things appear to be conclusively proved from the standards and government of this church; 1st. *That parents who offer up their children in baptism are constantly considered as believers*; and 2d. *That they cannot, in the nature of the case, be so considered unless they profess it.* The unavoidable conclusion from these premises is, *that she cannot consistently admit to baptism a child unless at least one of its parents is a professor of religion, known to the church as such by a credible profession.* The view which has been taken of the subject under the first head of dis-

course shews this to be the doctrine of the scriptures, I proceed,

III. *To answer objections which are brought against the practice which has been inculcated.**

The first objection which shall be noticed, is founded on the assumption, *That although faith is uniformly connected with the ordinance of baptism, both in the scriptures and the standards of this church, that it is merely that general faith which distinguishes its professors from known and acknowledged infidels and heathens, and that consequently, the children of such parents ought to be baptized.* To this I answer, That it cannot be proved from the scriptures, that the apostles asked no other faith than this, in order to admission to church privileges. But it can be proved that they thought very little of such a faith, and insisted, in the strongest terms upon a living faith, uniting to the Lord Jesus, working by love, purifying the heart, and overcoming the world. What the standards of this church mean by the expressions—“Faith, Faithful, Believers, Christians, Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ,” is not difficult to be determined. The first three terms are explained in the answer to the twenty-first question of the Heidelburgh Catechism. “True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word, but also an assured confidence which the Holy

* See particularly on this subject—“The whole works of the Rev. Thomas Boston,” printed at Edinburgh, in folio, 1767, at the 383d and following pages. In the tract commencing at that page, he discusses at large the question, “Who have a right to baptism, and are to be baptized?”

Ghost works by the Gospel in my heart, that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." From this it is evident, that when our standards speak of faith, they allude to that faith which God's people, *and they alone*, possess; and they, who possess this faith, are believers. Here there is no room for mistake—the language is plain and definite. The expression, "Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ," is of the same import. They alone are in him who are united to him by faith, and they are professedly in him who profess faith in him. What is intended by the use of the term, "Christian," may be determined from the answer to the thirty-second question. It is there asked, "But why art thou called a Christian?" The answer is, "Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of his anointing; that so I may confess his name, and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him; and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and satan in this life; and afterwards reign with him eternally over all creatures." Wherever we meet with the term "christian" in our standards, its meaning must be determined by this definition. These terms according to these definitions cannot be supposed to be used to distinguish the *nominal* followers of Christ from those who are properly infidels and heathens, but to distinguish the *real* followers of Christ from all others. Upon

no other construction can our standards be consistently interpreted. Differently interpreted, the parts would clash. An analogy, however, must be preserved. If the same terms in different parts of the same standards be differently construed, they may be made to mean, any thing, every thing, or nothing, according to the caprice or prejudice of the interpreter. This objection, therefore, is not tenable.

Another objection may be thus stated:—*Those who have been baptized in infancy, are members of the church, and, consequently, are entitled to the seal of the covenant for their children.* It is true that they are members, and have been recognized as such by the church. But baptism does not give them the right of membership. They are *infant* members, and they are such because they are born of parents who are under the bonds of the covenant, and not because they are baptized. It is this which gave them a right to the ordinance of baptism. They are members of the church as born of believing parents, and baptism is a sign and seal of it. But they are *infant* members, and can, consequently, be entitled only to the privileges of infant members. They change this relation for adult membership *only* by a credible profession, and in no other way. If this be not the case, they are as much entitled to offer up others in baptism while they themselves are infants, as when they arrive at adult age, nor does it appear how they can be debarred from the Lord's supper.

This, however, is an absurdity from which we would shrink. It is not then simply their baptism which gives them a right to offer up their children—It is their profession accepted on the part of the church.

But, to view this objection in another light, they are members, and, as members, are subject to the laws of God's house. Can they be considered as in good standing in that house, when they do not obey its laws? And are they entitled to all the privileges of that house, when they are not in good standing? But when they do not profess the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and neither promise nor render obedience, it is evident that their standing is bad. They break the laws, and are subject to the penalties. They thus forfeit the privileges which, under other circumstances, they would have a right to claim. If members, they must be considered as disorderly and disciplined ones. Their standing cannot be considered as good. Is there no difference with respect to privileges between good and bad standing? Why not then admit disorderly persons to the Lord's supper? Why not throw the doors of the church wide open, and bury the excluding key of the kingdom of heaven? If we, as a church, do not discipline them, we are greatly to blame for it, and it will be far from rectifying the error of neglect, to permit them to enjoy the privileges of a standing to which they are not entitled. This objection, therefore, has no force in it.

It is further objected, *That all the Jewish children were circumcised, and, therefore, all the children of those who have been baptized, are entitled to baptism, because baptism has come in the place of circumcision.* This assumption is perfectly gratuitous, and the objector would find it very difficult, and I believe, impossible, to prove what he has taken for granted. The objection asserts substantially, that there was no such thing as discipline in the Jewish church, which is abundantly contradicted by the word of God. There are no less than twenty-four crimes specified, for which the children of Israel were cut off from the congregation of the Lord. (*n*) One of these crimes was a refusal or neglect to eat the passover in its season. “But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to eat the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from the people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.” (*o*) There is no doubt but that the child of the excommunicated parent lost his right to the seal of the covenant, to which he *could* have no right which he did not derive from and through his parent. With the parent, therefore, he must stand or fall with respect to church privileges. Even the lowest degree of excommunication, deprived the child of circumcision.* The objection, therefore, rests

n Brown's Dictionary, article “Cut.”

o Numb. ix. 13.

* On this point the following authorities, from respectable and eminent writers, are cited, as bearing directly on the question. Godwini Moses et Aaron, folio 394, “Illius filii non circumcidebantur.” *His sons were*

on a false foundation, and the answer which has been given to it, if it prove any thing, proves conclusively, that those who habitually neglect the Lord's supper ought to have nothing to do with the ordinance of baptism.

It will now be in vain for the objector to urge that the non-professing parent is not guilty of immorality; that he merely neglects the Lord's supper,* and the profession which is connected with it. For it may immediately

not circumcised. Calmet's Dictionary, article Anathema—"Among the Hebrews the excommunicated could not circumcise their own sons."—Leideker, de republica Hebreorum, Tom. I. Lib. XI. cap. 8, folio 653 "Imo ejus filius non circumcideretur;" *Yea, his son might not be circumcised.* I; Selden, de jure Nat. et Gent. Lib. IV. cap. 8, folio 534, quotes a Jewish authority, which he renders in latin, "Nec, si filium, eum quis circumcideret;" *Nor, if he had a son, might any one circumcise him.* Vitringa, de Synagoga vetere, folio 739, speaks of excommunication as "Totalis separatio ab ecclesia;" *a total separation from the church.* At folio 747, he says, that the excommunicated person was separated, "A communicatione orationis, et conventus, et omnis sancti commercii;" *from communication of conversation, and assembly, and all holy intercourse.* That he was excluded folio 763, "A sacrorum communione omnino;" *from the communion of saints altogether.* That he was, fol. 765, "A corpore ecclesie penitus separatus;" *entirely separated from the body of the church.* The effect of excommunication, therefore, was to place the excommunicated on the same ground as the heathen; and Christ probably alludes to this very thing, and establishes this very principle, when he says, Mat. xviii. 17. "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Such also is the acknowledged effect of excommunication in the Reformed Dutch Church, as appears from the form of excommunication, "Therefore we, the ministers and rulers of the church of God, being here assembled in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, declare before you all, that, for the aforesaid reasons, we have excommunicated, and by these presents do excommunicate N. from the church of God, and from fellowship with Christ, and the holy sacraments."

* Actually communicating at the Lord's table is not considered as being necessary on the part of the parent, in order to the baptism of his child; but a profession which binds to obedience to this, as well as all Gods commands. The profession which does not go thus far, we are not bound to accredit.

he asked, Is it not immoral to neglect what the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded, and commanded as a test of love? The laws and precepts of God are the only legitimate tests of morality, and when we assume any other, we are adrift on a vast and tempestuous ocean, without chart or compass. Instead of being guiltless, the neglecter incurs a guilt which ought to deprive him of all the privileges of God's house—a guilt which warrants us to consider him as well *de jure* as *in facto*, excommunicated. Or, is the law under the new testament less strict than under the old? Is the obligation to commemorate the dying love of Christ smaller than the Israelite's obligation to keep the passover? Not unless deliverance from sin, death and hell, is of smaller moment than deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Whatever men may say or think on the subject, no small degree of guilt attaches to those who disobey a positive gospel precept. Notwithstanding every gloss which may be put upon it, it is highly immoral to act in this way; and we would be quite as justifiable in admitting swearers and drunkards to the Lord's table, as we are to admit those to have any thing to do with baptism, who do not make a *credible profession* of religion, and bind themselves to entire obedience to all the laws of God's house.

It is objected, *That such a mode of proceeding would hold out inducements to improper characters to make a profession of religion in order to have their children baptized.* The objection supposes what is not true in fact;

that improper characters will seek a place in God's house in the proportion in which that house is visibly more holy, and its gates more vigilantly guarded. Forming high estimates of the importance and sanctity of baptism, does not include in it the degradation of the Lord's supper. Besides, admitting that none are permitted to present their children before the Lord in baptism but professing parents, the same guards which now keep improper character's from the Lord's table, would still remain. Your ministers and consistories would not be less obligated to watch over the flocks committed to their charge by the Holy Ghost; nor would they feel less cautious in opening the door to communion. Observation does not prove that more improper characters find their way into the churches which baptize the infants of professed believers only, than into those which are more lax in this point. On the contrary, observation teaches, that the more strict churches have been in demanding a credible profession of religion from parents before they would admit their children to baptism, the more has vital religion flourished among them. God has owned the efforts of his servants when they have sought faithfully to guard the doors of his house. In fact, wherever low ideas are entertained of baptism, they will be entertained of the Lord's supper also. They will be entertained of all divine institutions. They, who can be brought with unhallowed hands, to touch one of God's ordinances, will not be easily brought to keep their un-

hallowed hands from the other. The objection is contradicted both by experience and observation.

It is also objected, *That by this mode of proceeding we deprive parents who wish to offer up their children to the Lord, of a privilege.* Is the church then responsible for their disobedience? Is it not their own act? Do they not exclude themselves? The church is willing to receive them, but she is bound by laws, and she must receive them and grant them privileges according to those laws. To those laws they refuse to submit. Her refusal to receive them is a consequence of their refusal to obey. The difficulty is one of their own making, and they are evidently responsible for all the consequences which result from it. They shut the door against themselves. They have as much right to demand at the hands of God without faith, the blessings which he has graciously promised to faith, as to demand of the church privileges which are connected with a profession, when they make no profession. The cause of refusal, therefore, is to be sought in the unbelieving and disobedient parents. So far, however, is it from being a privilege to an unbelieving parent to offer up his child in baptism, that it is an act of mercy to prevent him, for it keeps him from mocking God, and injuring himself.

Finally—It is objected, *That by refusing to baptize the children of non-professing parents, we punish and injure the children when they have no partnership in the guilt of their parents.* This assumption is perfectly un-

warrantable. It is admitted that baptism is an important privilege to children when rightly administered. Being thus baptized, they have a right to the prayers, and care, and instructions of the church; and the church not only is bound, but has a gospel right to plead on their behalf, the covenant and promises of God. This certainly is an important privilege. But how do children acquire this right? It is of a relative nature. It arises from their connection with their parents. Apart from their parents the church does not know them. She has no authority over them. She can reach the child only through the parent. When, therefore, we have proved that the parent has no right, the child can claim none. Who is it then that deprives, and injures, and punishes the child? It is not the church. It is the unbelieving parent who refuses submission to the laws of God's house. It cannot be contended with any degree of plausibility, that the child has a right to visible and acknowledged membership, but by and through its parent. Instead, therefore, of complaining of the church, it has a right to say to its parents, You deprive me—You have separated me from the church and people of the living God—You have robbed me of the prayers, the care, the government, and the instructions of the church—You have deprived me of the seal of Jehovah's covenant. There is enough in this to make a parent's heart ache, and wring his soul. Let them think of it deeply and seriously. Such are the objections to the view which has been taken of the sub-

ject; and such the answers which may be given to them. So far are they from invalidating the conclusion to which the argument has been brought, that it remains more firm and decisive. This conclusion, I believe to be conformable to the word of God and the standards of this church.

From the subject to which your attention has been called, we may infer,

1. *That baptism is an important and holy institution, designed by the great Head of the church as a seal and encouragement to his people's faith, and in the participation of which in faith, they may hope for his blessing.* What God appoints, he appoints for important purposes, and we may expect that the ends contemplated by divine institutions will be ensured when they are used according to the intentions of the institutor. When, therefore, the believing parent has the seal of the covenant put upon his infant seed, by which they are recognized as belonging to the God of the covenant, he has a visible token of the divine favour, not only to himself, but to his offspring. His soul then embraces the promise of the covenant, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee"; and he is enabled to hope that the Lord will fulfil all his promises, keeping him by his power through faith unto salvation, and that he will in due season communicate his saving grace to his offspring, and at last bring them to the enjoyment of his rest in the paradise of God. This encourages him to vigilance in instructing

his children in those things which relate to their eternal welfare—makes him watchful over them—prompts him to set them a godly example, and makes him importunate for them at the throne of grace. He stays his soul upon the promise, and he pleads in hope. He knows that God who hath promised is faithful, and waits with patience in a way of duty for the fulfilment of the promise—We may infer,

2. *That parents who offer up their children to the Lord in the ordinance of baptism do solemnly covenant with the Lord to be his, and bind themselves to the most important duties.* The plain language of such an engagement is, that they take the Lord to be their God in covenant, and reconciled Father; and that they devote themselves to be his humble and obedient followers. If there be any meaning in this transaction, it is this. Less than this we cannot suppose it to mean. It requires then the best exercises of the renewed heart. It is an act of solemn worship, which requires solemn fear and reverence from those who approach God in it. He who has approached God in it has said, I am not my own—I am bought with a price—I belong to Jehovah—“I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.”
(w) Such should be our reflections, if we have ever engaged in this solemn transaction.

The duties to which we have bound ourselves are also of the most important and interesting nature. The

^w Judges xi. 35.

parent who offers up his child to the Lord in this ordinance is under the strongest obligations to lead a new and holy life, as well on his child's account as his own. He is obliged to be personally pious, and to discharge important duties to his offspring. These are inseparably connected; they cannot be separated from each other. The duties to which we have bound ourselves with respect to our children have been stated to be these. To teach them to the extent of our ability those things which make for their everlasting peace—To set them a godly example--To exercise over them christian government, restraining them from evil, and leading them in the paths of righteousness, and to pray with them and for them. These are unquestionably important duties which ought to be deeply and seriously impressed upon the minds of all those who have thus covenanted with God. With the discharge of these duties the peace and comfort of parents, and the present and everlasting welfare of their children are intimately connected. There can be no doubt, that children are ordinarily ruined through the neglect of their parents in one or other of these particulars. Want of government ruined the family of good old Eli; and want of government, instruction, example, or prayer, has ruined thousands of others. Let parents see to this, for they are one day to answer for it before the dread tribunal of their final judge. Let them remember that they have covenanted with Jehovah, and bound themselves to the discharge of duties which involve the salva-

tion of their offspring. The neglect of parents not only brings reproach upon infant baptism, but destroys the precious souls of their children. Than this, a greater reproach does not rest upon pedobaptist churches. It has been like a mill-stone about their necks. Until the law of God becomes the law of our families—until the worship of God be established in our houses—until we live godly lives, walking in the way of God's commandments—and until our families become schools of christian education, this will continue to be the case. When, O when, shall we wipe off this reproach, and arise from the dust!

5. We may infer from this subject, *That parents have no right to offer up their children in baptism, on any other footing, than that of their being professed believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is unquestionably their duty to offer up their children to the Lord in this ordinance, but it is *equally* their duty to do it in a way of faith and obedience. It has been clearly shewn that we cannot please God without faith, and that we cannot be looked upon by the *church* as having faith *unless we profess it.* Let us bear this in mind, for it is important that we should: important to churches, and important to parents and children. The purity and prosperity of the church, and the welfare of parents and children are involved.

To an unbelieving! parent, (and such the church is bound to esteem all who do not consistently profess the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ,) it is no privilege to

offer up his children in baptism. It looks like mocking God—like setting his hand to a covenant which his heart rejects. It is undertaking to discharge the duties of faith, while he remains in unbelief. It appears very much like saying, I can trust my children in God's hands, but I dare not or will not trust myself there. This is inconsistent. *We* need God as much as our *children*. His blessing is as necessary to *us* as to *them*. It appears like holding back a part of the price, and lying to God. Can we hope that the blessing of God will attend us or our children, if we thus rashly approach him? What, under such circumstances, is it but *custom or superstition*? God is an holy God—the ordinance of baptism is holy—the duties to be performed are holy. The Lord says "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God, am holy." (x) That which qualifies you, as adults, for one of God's ordinances, qualifies you for the other; and that which excludes you from the one, ought to exclude you from the other. You are just as fit to participate the blood of Christ in *the cup of blessing which we bless*, as in *the water* which we apply in baptism. Look at the standards of your church, and see whether it be not so—Nay, look at the word of God, and see whether it be not so. You have no reason to believe that baptism will benefit either you or your children, unless you offer them in faith. But you have reason to fear that your condemnation will be increased. Ask your hearts, How can we covenant with God without faith? How can we bring up our children

in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, without faith? And, how can we expect to be considered as believers unless we profess the name and religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, and live lives of holiness and obedience? How, then, when ye *are* not believers, nor *profess* to be, can ye ask to have your children baptized? Act consistently.

To those of us who bear rule in the church, whether we sustain the character of pastors, or ruling elders, the subject to which your attention has been directed is highly important. It involves, in no small degree, the purity and prosperity of the church. It is a question of christian *practice*, and not of *doctrine*, for we admit on all hands that children ought to be baptized. The only question on the subject is the one which has been answered in the discussion to which we have attended; viz: *Whose children are entitled to the ordinance?* If the argument has been sustained, the answer is, *The children of professed believers; the children of believers because the faith of the parent gives the child the right before God; of professed believers, because the church knows their faith only by their profession.* If these things are so, those who bear rule in the church of God are in duty bound to exclude all others.* They are God's

* This duty the Reformed Dutch Church has acknowledged and inculcated, as will appear from the following extract from the minutes of the General Synod, convened in the city of New-York on the 5th day of June 1816.

“Your committee have taken into consideration the question on the subject of baptism as stated by the Consistory of Schenectady to the Classis

stewards and overseers of the flock which Christ has purchased with his own blood ; and of stewards it is required that a man be found faithful. If it be the will of God that children of believing parents only be baptized, by opening the door and admitting others, we act contrary to the intentions of the law-giver, and are in danger of incurring his displeasure. Nor have we any reason to expect his blessing.

Is the language of this church, and of the word of God also, what it has been represented to be ? Then, my brethren, our duty is plain. We have no right to admit them upon any other footing than that of *professed faith*. Proceeding in a different manner, we impeach ourselves. We deny the standards which we have subscribed, and the paramount authority of God. Under these circumstances we need not expect the divine blessing upon our flocks ; and perhaps this is one reason why so many of our churches are like a *parched wilderness---like a heath in the desert*. What we might expect from a different practice, is evident from what God has done in those churches where this branch of christian discipline has been revived. Where God and his institutions are honored of Albany, together with the answer of that Classis, and the reference of the Particular Synod of Albany to this General Synod, on the question, and are of opinion that the answer of the Classis is incorrect, as they do not find that it is answered by the General Synod in the affirmative, explicitly, and therefore recommend, that the decision of the General Synod of 1804 be so altered, as to recommend to the ministers and consistories **not to admit to baptism the children of parents who do not manifest evidences, from which, according to the judgment of charity, it may be concluded that they possess *faith* and *piety***." This was adopted by Synod.

ored, he ordinarily commands the blessing. It is, at all events, worth a fair experiment; and it is for those to whom have been entrusted the keys of the kingdom, to use them faithfully and in the fear of God.

If this be the path of duty we are most strongly and solemnly bound to follow it, at all hazards. With consequences we have no concern. They belong to God, not to us. In this respect Jesus says to us as he did to Peter, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." If the discharge of duty should even empty our churches, it ought to make no difference. The faithful servants of Christ would sooner become beggars than violate their consciences—than run in the face of God's commandments. That trimming, temporizing policy which makes "Expediency" its motto, never yet built up churches and glorified God in the salvation of sinners. But even on the principles of that wretched policy, our practice ought to be pure and strict. Purity and strictness will not empty our churches. Our people will not violate the rights of conscience. They will not pollute the souls of their ministers who labour faithfully and honestly for their good. They will not fly from a faithful minister. When we go to them and tell them with affection, this is the language of the word of God—this is the language of the standards of our church—this language our consciences subscribe, and without practicing conformably to it we have no reason to expect a blessing. They will at least pause and inquire, and most probably be brought,

if they are not the professed followers of Christ, to tell you, I am not a believer—I am not a christian, and therefore you ought not to admit me to this ordinance. Ought we not to expect that such reflections would, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, be sanctified, and enable them eventually to come as true worshippers. The experiment has often been tried, and tried with success.

My brethren, it does appear to me, that the path of duty is plain and open before us. Our people need instruction on this point; let us give it to them. Our practice needs reforming; let us not be ashamed to retrace our steps, if they have been wrong. If we do not exclude and instruct our non-professing people, they will ere long exclude themselves. A little reflection will lead to such results. Deliverance and enlargement will come, although those who bear the ark refuse to co-operate in bringing it to pass. Let it then be our earnest endeavor and study, to follow the Lord *wholly*, that our souls may rejoice in his blessing when he shall pour it out, and make our Zion a praise in the churches.—AMEN.

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