

BV

A 55116 3

813

.H39

STORAGE

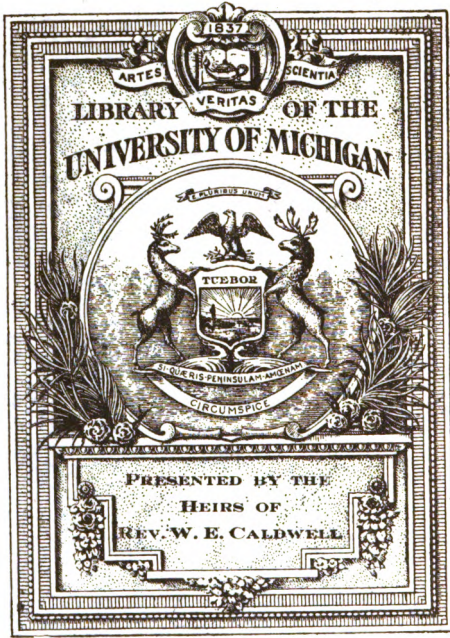
1195

The Abrahamic Covenant

Rev. H.H. Hawes, D.D.



1279



Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-03-08 22:27 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.390150512212
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

THE
ABRAHAMIC
COVENANT.

BY
REV. H. H. HAWES, D. D.



RICHMOND:
PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

4-2-36 JON

Prefatory Note.

I HAVE endeavored in this little work to give to the Church the benefit of many years' hard study of the subject here treated. There are multitudes, even among our own people, who do not understand it, because they have not studied it, or could not do so.

Again, they have found difficulty because of an error which has been industriously and widely taught, viz.: That the great doctrines of God's Word and Christian duty can be easily known and proved by some "express" or detached verse of the Bible.

But the truth is, that *the whole Scriptures need to be searched*, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," "that we might know the things that are freely given us of God." (1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.)

If one verse, or twenty verses, would suffice for doctrine, why has God given this large revelation

221

of His will? Why such a large book as the Bible?

He who rests upon one verse only, or upon authority less than the whole Word of God, will almost surely fall into error. Therefore the Apostle said: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly* furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.)

The Scriptures must be *searched*, if we would know what to believe and hold. And this requires time, patience, and laborious study. No system of doctrine can be developed properly otherwise. I dare not rest my own faith upon less than the whole Word of God. And I send forth this work to counsel others, that they may know the whole and perfect will of God concerning them and their children.

H. H. H.

FARMVILLE, VA., 1879.

The Abrahamic Covenant.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory.

[*The earnest request is, that the reader will study this book side by side with the Bible.*]

THE demand is often made for a "Thus saith the Lord"—an "express verse" of Scripture—to show that infant church-membership and infant baptism are right and lawful. The best answer to this requirement is, "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of these things."

(Or we may use an illustration, viz. :) The river which flows through a country is certainly more than any one of its tributaries. To find this *river* is more satisfactory proof of its existence than to be able to name any one or all of its tributaries. Nor can all the tributaries united be greater than the river into which they flow. Thus,

when we find a doctrine running through the whole Bible, we should be better satisfied with this than with any one verse declaring it.

The object of this work is to show that the doctrine of infant church-membership (which involves infant baptism) extends almost from beginning to end of God's Word. We appeal to an open Bible. This is the "only rule of faith and manners." If, by this, it can be shown that God gives to the infants of his professing people membership in his Church, it follows as a matter of course that they are entitled to baptism, by which membership is recognized. But what is the *Church*? This word is used in several senses. We shall use it only as applying to the visible body upon earth. We speak of what we call "The Visible Church," and as a true and proper definition of this visible Church, present and undertake to establish the proposition, that *it is composed of all those persons in the world who profess the religion and service of Jesus Christ, together with their children.*

It is objected by many, that the Church is

composed only of believers. This would be true, were we speaking of the *invisible* Church, which is composed of all the saints, both in heaven and earth. But of the *visible* Church it is not true. If we are to receive none but believers, then none can be received. Human judgment must decide who are to be accepted as members upon profession of faith. And it is impossible that we should surely decide who has faith and who has not. Therefore, if none but believers are to be taken as members, we are at once prevented from acting, by our inability to read the heart, and to know that faith is certainly there. We can act only upon *credible profession* of faith in the case of adults. Nor does God anywhere teach that his visible Church is composed only of adult believers. The idea is purely human, therefore not Scriptural.

It is further objected, that as infants cannot believe, they cannot be members of this Church. Are we also to argue, that as infants cannot believe, they cannot be saved? To this horrible result the objector's logic carries him.

God never said, "he that believeth not shall have no visible church-membership." But he *does* say very positively, "he that believeth not shall be damned."

But now we propose to show, in this discussion, that the loving God who, as we all believe, has given the dying infants a place in heaven, has also given the living infants a place in his Church on earth.

But, in order to understand how this can be, it is necessary to free ourselves from error as to the origin and nature of the Church. The objectors to infant membership assume that the Church was founded by the apostles, under the direction of Jesus Christ. But not one among all the apostles says or does anything to warrant this idea. They wrought in a Church *already existing*. Therefore the inspired word tells us that those received were "*added to*" the Church. Under the first preaching of the apostles we read, "There were added to them about three thousand souls." (Acts ii. 41.) None of the apostles intimate that a new Church was formed.

The numerous adult baptisms are explained by the fact that the Church was then thrown open for the first time to those who were not before in covenant relation with God, and had not, therefore, been recognized by the covenant token in infancy. If we now organize churches in destitute places, or in heathen lands, we do not *originate* the Church there. We simply extend its territory and membership. So did these apostles.

They wrought under "a new dispensation" in the already existing Church. And however much their work may resemble the *originating* of the Church, it was not so. It was *reformation* and *extension*. For Christ did not come to create a Church, but to *reform* that in which "the fathers" worshipped. Therefore, in Heb. ix. 10, his coming is called "the time of reformation."

In perfect accord with this, the martyr Stephen spoke of Moses, who was "in the Church in the wilderness . . . in the Mount Sinai." (See Acts, vii. 38.) Was the Church originated there, then? No. Moses ministered in the Church already ex-

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-03-08 22:27 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015057121212
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

isting, as a servant in God's house. (Numb. xii. 7; Heb. iii. 1-6.) The Jewish *nation* had its origin at Sinai. But the Church was older, having received its covenant *four hundred and thirty years before* the law was given at this Mount Sinai. (Gal. iii. 17.)

Back, at the beginning of this four hundred and thirty years, as the apostle reckoned it, we find the birth of the visible Church. There, for the first time, God separated a people unto himself, and gave the covenant, with its token, unto Abraham. This man is the Church father of the world,—“the father of us all,” whether we be Jews or Gentiles.

Such is the positive declaration of God's Word. Compare Gen. xii. 1-3, xvii. 1-4, with Rom. iv., Gal. iii. In these chapters the doctrine which we propose to examine is fully and plainly taught.

In the Old and the New Testament, God recognizes “the Church in the house,” and here is the doctrine of infant church-membership.



CHAPTER II.

The First Church-member.

SINCE the days of Abel, there had been believers in this world, but no organization or society such as the Church is. There were members of the *invisible* Church, but no *visible* Church existed. This visible organization appears first in the family of the man Abraham. Him God called, and separated from kindred and country to be the great Church-father of the world. And we see also that God organized this society or Church in the household of Abraham with *infant membership in view*. The child, eight days' old, was to receive the covenant token—circumcision. The adult males of his household were also to receive it. But the infant of eight days could not exercise faith, and we have no evidence whatever, nor hint, that any other member of Abraham's household was a believer. So in the organization of the visible Church, some of its members were without faith.

There are "*distinctive views*" opposing this. But it is the record of God's Word. (Gen. xvii. 9-14.)

His ways and thoughts are different from ours. (Isaiah lv: 8, 9.) But as this is God's Church, he alone has the right to give its constitution and laws. Let us now study the transactions between God and this man Abraham. Notice,—

1. God's first call to him is given in (Gen. xii.) His name was then *Abram*. God separated him from heathenism, and gave him certain promises.

(1.) "I will make of thee a great nation." This was fulfilled in the organization of the Jewish nation, four hundred and thirty years afterwards, at Sinai. It had no other fulfilment—did not embrace any other nations. Abram's descendants multiplied until they were numerous enough to be a nation and win a country.

(2.) Another special and larger promise is made, (in Gen. xii. 3) unlike the other, in embracing all the "*families* of the earth." And now next,—

2. We see that a special and separate cove-

nant was made for each of these promises. One is found in Gen. xv., the other in Gen. xvii.—one for temporal, the other for spiritual good.

(1.) The covenant for temporal good is found in Gen. xv. Now notice it well.

In obedience to God's call, Abram has left his own country, and is sojourning in the land of Canaan—the land which was to be the home of the "great nation." In verse 3, he complains that he has no heir.

In verse 5, God promises him "seed" to inherit the land. In verse 8, Abram asks an assurance of this. Then God makes the covenant of the inheritance with him. (9-18.) *This covenant is made and ratified by sacrifice.*

(a.) It was made with *Abram*, not Abraham.

(b.) It was by sacrifice, and *had no outward token.* The sacrifice accepted was the Divine deed to the land. It had no other sign at all—no token to be perpetuated.

(c.) It was all and only for temporal good. It *had not one spiritual feature in it.*

(d.) No other nations or families are included in it. All this should now be borne in mind. *This Canaan covenant was made and sealed by sacrifice. It was for one nation. (Gen. xii. 2.) It had no sign by which the heirs were to be afterwards marked. Read! See! Remember! Those who attach circumcision to this covenant are in error.*

(2.) After some years, God again came to Abram for covenant-making. (Gen. xvii.) Here note:

(a.) His first greeting (verse 1) is a demand for spiritual service. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect."

(b.) He proposes a covenant to Abram which he calls "my covenant." (verse 2,) by which Abram is to be made "father," not of one nation, as in Gen. xv., but of "many nations." (Verse 4.) But,

(c.) *Abram's name is now changed* (verse 5) *for this covenant.* God makes it with *Abraham*. The other (Gen. xv.) was made with *Abram*. God's reason for this change is, "For a father of many nations have I made thee." And these

“many nations” were to be his *spiritual seed*. They were not to be children of the flesh, *and did not afterwards inherit Canaan*. So this covenant cannot point to the Canaan inheritance.

(*d.*) In verse 7, God promises to “establish,” make perpetual, this covenant.

(*e.*) In verse 8 is a *repetition* of the Canaan covenant of chapter xv.—to assure *Abraham* that the covenant made with *Abram* (chapter xv.) should also stand, and that this second covenant would not change or interfere with it. By the first covenant he was to be the father of a nation, to inherit Canaan. By the second he was to be the spiritual father of “many nations,” not of his flesh and blood, and which would have no inheritance in Canaan. After this assurance that the second covenant would not conflict with the first, God proceeds to make the second.

(*f.*) In verse 9, He commands, “Thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations”—“*keep*,” that is, observe and perform its duties. But note: No command was given to “keep” the covenant of

Gen. xv. for the Canaan possession. No duties were there enjoined. After the sacrifice faith had simply to wait for the fulfilment of the promise.

But this second covenant (chapter xvii.) differs in positively demanding spiritual service; and in the requirement to "keep" it, to observe and perform its duties in all generations.

(g.) In verse 10, the covenant is stated: "This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised; . . . it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." (Verses 10-14.)

But who are the "seed" here? Verse 5—"A father of many nations have I made thee." These "many nations" are the "seed" in this covenant.

(h.) This covenant, unlike the other, has an outward token to be perpetuated upon future generations. Circumcision is the token, and is *here mentioned for the first time*. It was not even hinted at in the covenant for Canaan. (Chapter

xv.) That covenant was, so to speak, folded up and laid away, or "filed," after the signatures of Divine acceptance and of sacrificial offering had been affixed.

Circumcision belonged only to this covenant for the "many nations," which was to bless "all families of the earth." (Gen. xii. 3.) It was not affixed to the covenant for the Jewish nation—the "one nation."

Now these are accurate statements—the facts of the record. What is here said is according to the Word of God. Look and see. So far, we have given the "Thus saith the Lord" in laying our foundations. We have pointed out the only transaction upon record where God can truly be said to have formed a visible society or Church on earth.

From Abraham to Christ God was *laying its foundation*. The New Testament Church is built upon this. Therefore Paul (Eph. ii. 20) goes back to the Old Testament Church for the foundation upon which the New Testament Church is built among the Gentiles. A foundation is a part

of a house. The house is built upon it—could not be built without it. So our Church is one with, and would not exist without, the Old Testament Church. The believer, Abraham, was the first “stone” laid in the foundation, and his infant “seed” were built in with him in their generations—all receiving “the mark” designating them as “stones” chosen of God. When Christ came, he examined this foundation,—tried the “stones,” and cast out such as proved unworthy, but retained the good; then proceeded to “build” his Church as we now see it. On this “cleared” foundation the whole Church is built. (Eph. ii.) As the foundation is not the complete house, so we know how to understand Heb. xi. 40, which teaches that the Old Testament Church was not “made perfect” without us. As the completed house is better than the naked foundation, so this same verse says God has “provided some better thing for us.”

CHAPTER III.

Circumcision Not Merely National.

WE have seen that circumcision had no place, and was not even named, in the Canaan covenant. (Gen. xv.) We now say that it belongs to *the spiritual* side of God's dealings with Abraham in Gen. xvii. God said, "It shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." The words "and to thy seed after thee" are not added here (Gen. xvii. 11); *for the believing parent is commanded to stand and act in faith* for his "unconscious babes." The assertion that circumcision was a spiritual rite is expressly made in the Word of God. (Rom. iv. 11.) 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." Read this over again. It is the utterance

of God's Word—a "Thus saith the Lord." Immersionists insist that circumcision was only "a Jewish rite; only marked Jewish nationality; sealed the Canaan promise; had no religious significance, etc."

Our answer is, the utterances of God's Word. *This gives circumcision a spiritual meaning only, and shows its institution as the token of membership in the body of God's people through some ages in God's visible Church.*

The token was not, therefore, given to mark the Jew, nor insure the fulfilment of the Canaan promise. As further establishing this point, notice—

1. There were no Jews and no Jewish nation to mark when the token was ordained. The Jewish nation had no existence until more than four hundred and thirty years afterwards. *Abraham was not a Jew, but a Chaldean.* We were once charged by a "Baptist" paper with want of truth, for making this assertion about Abraham. What does God's Word say? (Gen. xi. 27-31.) "Teraah begat Abram, Nahor and Haran. . . . And

Haran died before his father Terah, in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. . . . And Terah took Abram his son, . . . and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan." Was not he a Chaldean? He was born, grew to manhood, and married, in Ur, a city of Chaldea! (See also Gen. xv. 7.) In his day there were no Jews, so no Jewish nation; yet circumcision was ordained and transmitted from father to son in the divinely chosen line.

2. If it was only to ensure entrance to Canaan, why did Joshua (Joshua, v.) *cause it to be renewed after the Israelites had entered Canaan?* If it was only to ensure *possession* of Canaan, why was it continued *after* the people had actually possessed the land,—even to and some time after the coming of Christ?

But the chief thought is this: that to say circumcision marked nationality only, is to deny plain *facts* and *Scripture* both. It did not mean loyalty to the state, but to God. He was Ruler over the Church and state both. But the circum-

cised man was a servant of God. If a heathen received circumcision, he thereby confessed his acceptance of the true God. Note further:—

God has always wrought by *means* to reclaim man. To the time of Abraham, his seed-truths had been scattered broad-cast in the world, without special "*fencing in*" or culture. The "weeds" choked the seed; then God's wisdom adopted means to secure the preservation of his truth among men. As a writer well says: "Instead of dealing any longer with the millions of the race, instead of emptying garners of truth over fens and swamps which enveloped the seed and yielded no return, he took in a little piece of holy ground! He laid hold of one family and selected it as the recipient and custodian of Divine revelation. By a very remarkable process, he fenced in and secluded that family, making it a peculiar people, dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations; and when the great purpose was answered, and the wall of separation was broken down, it was on the hills of Palestine that the handful of corn was found which now waves on

our English fields, and will yet make all the mountains of the earth like Lebanon."

So God chose a "peculiar people" to be the keeper of his "oracles" until the fulness of time" was come. He took *one family for special training*. This family, preserved in the line of Isaac—this one, special line,—was to hand down to its generations the truths of God. This family grew into "a great nation," which God brought to Canaan, and thus *entirely fulfilled* his first covenant (Gen. xv.) with Abraham. Now, because the will of God for the time was so, the bounds of the nation limited for a while the bounds of the visible Church. And circumcision retained its first significance, as truly as baptism has since done. Both these rites are of the same Divine source. The visible Church was organized with circumcision as its covenant token. But in reforming the Church, and opening it to the whole world, our Lord, as head of the Church, instituted baptism, which being practiced by his command, displaced circumcision in the course of time, and caused it to cease in the Church.

Baptism thus goes to the class which once received circumcision, namely, the infants of God's professed people. It is the new seal in God's visible Church.

The first members of this Church were the family of Abraham. When "the time of reformation" (Heb. ix. 10) came, "the middle wall of partition" was broken down, and the Church doors were thrown open to all families and nations of the earth, though *they were not of the circumcision*. But to all these, Abraham was father of circumcision. (Rom. iv. 12.)

Not only this, but the teachings of Moses also (Deut. x. 12-22,) declare the spirituality of circumcision. It had reference to the state of the heart. (Verse 16.) Moses had concluded a review of the law-giving and all incidents pertaining to it. (Verse 11.) And after this, he expressly charges Israel to give God spiritual service. He commands *circumcision of the heart* as an essential part of this service. And this idea is persistently held by the sacred writers of both Testaments. (Deut. xxx. 6; Jer. iv. 4; Rom. ii. 29; Col. ii. 11.)

This token, then, was not a part of the ceremonial law. We have seen that it was given long before the law. Therefore, it is a most unfair statement, which the author of "Scriptural Communion" (p. 29) makes, that "circumcision was the initiatory rite of the Mosaic dispensation." This would lead one to suppose that it *originated* with Moses. So also, the author of "Baptist Short Method" says "Circumcision was a Mosaic rite." Are such assertions *intended* to mislead? We hope not.

But such is their tendency. The want of accuracy results in many false statements. The Bible says *Abraham* received circumcision from God, "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had." (Gen. xvii.; Acts vii. 8; Rom. iv. 11.) Now is this true, or not? Again: "The promise that he should be heir of the world *was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.* Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that which is of the law, but to that also

which is of faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." (Rom. iv. 16, 17.)

Paul here quotes (in verse 17) God's own words, when he gave "the covenant of circumcision (Acts vii. 8) to Abraham; and he teaches Abraham's spiritual fatherhood in this very connection, even where there is no circumcision. Walking in "the steps" of Abraham's faith, we are his seed and heirs in this covenant. When we walk in the steps of his faith, do we look forward to an inheritance in the land of Canaan? Certainly not. Then this covenant of circumcision did not refer to that inheritance. (See Gal. iii. 29.) It has been erroneously said also by the author of "Three Reasons," that the covenant of circumcision "was the germ of the Sinaic covenant; and again, "the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham received its full development in the covenant of Mt. Sinai." (See pp. 43-45, Edition of 1856.) This is nothing short of a flat contradiction of Paul's teaching in Gal. iii. 15-17. The apostle speaks of these two covenants as separate and distinct. They operate in wholly separate spheres.

And the express teaching is that the Abrahamic covenant was *not in the least affected or changed* by the giving of the law. How then could the latter be a development of the former? On one side is this "Thus saith the Lord." On the other, is a man's assertion. Which is right?

CHAPTER IV.

The Church.

A BRAHAM was the first member. His infant sons were also members by virtue of connection with the believing parent.

This visible Church was formed in the family and household of this believing head. Now, God's Word teaches that the Church is the body, of which Jesus Christ is the "Head." And he was the head of this society to which Abraham and his infant sons belonged; for we are told that Abraham's faith saw and rejoiced in Christ's day. (John, viii. 56-58.) So the present connection of the Church with this man is through Christ. He was declared by Paul to be "father of us all" in this family of God. (Rom. iv. 16.) But how? If it is written, "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ," it is also written immediately after, "and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 26-29.) Now, then, if New

Testament believers are the seed of Abraham, are they not of the Church and covenant of Abraham also? This visible Church was a new thing in the world. No other such society ever existed. Perhaps there were some in that day who mocked at such a Church, as is sometimes done now. But this is the work of God. The idea of the Church in the family is thoroughly scriptural. We speak of the "Church Catholic," or universal, embracing all of God's professing people in the world. But the germ from which this body grew was the Church in the family of Abraham. We see the same idea preserved and taught by the New Testament. (See Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Col. iv. 15; Philemon, 2.) But what was the pre-requisite for membership in this Church?

1. Faith must be exercised, to begin with; so God selected Abraham, the man of faith. (Rom. iv. 3.) He received the Church token, then gave it to his infant seed. If the New Testament connection of faith and baptism seems contrary to this, we should remember that Christ sent his Gospel to those who were not in any covenant

relation to God—to *heathen*. The *uncovenanted* adult was called to enter the covenant by faith. He had *never believed*. He had *never received the covenant token*. Therefore he was commanded to believe and be baptized.

2. But Abraham's faith was not the only reason for his circumcision. Faith could exist without this, as in the case of all believers before his day; but those believers had never been formed into a regularly organized and visible society.

The token was given to Abraham *to mark him as a member of the newly-formed visible Church*; and, in obedience to God, he gave it to such others as God chose to name as members of this Church, whether *they* had faith or not. Faith was not the only pre-requisite to membership, nor to circumcision, the token of membership. *God's choice* of members made the reception of the token necessary. Therefore we see—

3. That infants only eight days old, who could not exercise faith, received the very same token which the believing father had received. Is there room for man to cavil here? God said, "Cir-



circumcise them. It shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." Abraham did not dispute with God about this; nor should "the seed of Abraham" now do so.

4. All the males of Abraham's household were also to be circumcised in forming this society; but we do not know that any one besides Abraham had faith. The covenant was made with the believer; and upon the fact of his faith was based the duty of circumcising the others. Thus the head of the family was made to represent the whole family in the faith. God ordered it so.

5. God was very positive in demanding obedience to this covenant-law. To omit circumcision was to forfeit all rights in the covenant. It was *covenant breaking*. (Gen. xvii. 14.)

6. The society thus formed is spoken of as spiritual. God's Word always regards it in this light. The membership began with a man of faith, and was to be increased and perpetuated by giving the token to the infants of each succeeding generation. Such a Church man would never have formed. Therefore the many objections

which are made to it. Therefore many insist that this was a national covenant, and its token a national mark. But, in addition to what has been said, I may ask here, What part had Abraham and his household in Jewish nationality? His infant, Isaac, must live about *five hundred years* to obtain any part in the Jewish nation; but he lived only one hundred and eighty years, and was not born when the covenant *was made for him by his believing father*. Here is a believing parent acting for his “unconscious babe,” by God’s command. Is it right to do such a thing, therefore? When this son was born, *he was born within the covenant*, and for this reason was entitled to its token. This was God’s law. Is it right? Yea, verily!

And in Gen. xviii. 19, we see God’s thought in giving this law. Abraham was not to train Isaac and other “seed” to fit them for the Canaan inheritance, but “*that they shall keep the way of the Lord.*”

“Thus saith the Lord!”

So, now, the believing parent is to stand and

act and speak (as Abraham did) out of his own faith for those of his family who, as yet, cannot believe.

Many criticise this doctrine most harshly, and mock at us for holding it. Nevertheless, "the foundation of God standeth sure." The objections of man's wisdom cannot shake it.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-03-08 22:27 GMT / <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015057212212>
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

CHAPTER V.

Design of the Covenant.

THE design of the covenant, as already intimated, was to perpetuate and spread God's truth among men. The covenanted people were of one special line of descent. In Gen. xvii. Abraham pleads, "O that Ishmael might live before thee." God answers by a promise of great temporal good for Ishmael, but said, "My covenant will I establish with Isaac." So, too, Paul teaches in Rom. ix. 6-8. He adheres to the "Thus saith the Lord." And in Gal. iv. 28, he says to *Gentiles*, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of the promise." Thus, mere carnal descent did not constitute any one "the seed of Abraham." Ishmael was of the very blood of Abraham, yet not his "seed." The Galatians had none of Abraham's blood in them, *yet they were his "seed."* The relation was spiritual, and for spiritual purposes. God thus bound this man Abraham to keep and train his household as the people of Je-

hovah. By circumcising them, he was committed to this duty. In turn, Isaac was so to train his household; and so on through all generations. Thus the truth about God was to be preserved in the world. And God's people, by these means, multiplied on the earth as they had not done before this covenant was made! This is significant. Let us divide time into three ages, and then note—

1. Adam to Noah. During this age, man had every advantage of personal communion with God. But no covenant appears, imposing on parents the duty of keeping and training their children for God. The result was heathenism in all the earth, except in the family of one man,—Noah. Man started fairly, and under every advantage, yet wandered off in succeeding generations.

2. From Noah to Abraham. After the flood-judgment upon the apostate world, God started the race again in the family of righteous Noah. But still no covenant of “a Church in the family” was given. No token upon parents and children reminded the generations of obligations to be the Lord's. The result again was a total degeneracy.

And in Abraham's day, he seems to be almost the only believer on earth.

3. From Abraham to the present time. Behold! the whole earth is full of the knowledge of God! Instead of heathenism destroying God's truth, the truth of God destroys heathenism. This result was wrought by *the covenant of circumcision!* Shall we deny actual history? But for this covenant, *insuring the transmission* of God's truth from parent to child, and compelling to it, so to speak, by every sacred obligation, this world would have been heathenized the third time! But the covenant has been the preservation of a people for God, and their increase also. Even with the covenant, the struggle was a desperate one. When Christ came, almost the whole separated nation was apostate. Idolatry had found lodgment again and again. Yet there was a faithful remnant, like the "seven thousand which had not bowed the knee to Baal." So Paul said in Rom. xi. 5. So facts proved. God still had his covenanted people in the nation, remembering Abraham and the covenant. The "peculiar peo-

ple," notwithstanding their corruption, preserved God's oracles and ordinances. The covenant, binding the visible Church together, kept alive the truth about God.

This same result is now secured by our covenant relations. Rejecters of this covenant scoff at the thought. But did scoffing ever turn truth into falsehood? They do not preach better than Enoch and Noah, and cannot hold the world by preaching a pure Gospel more securely than those first preachers to adults did. Simple knowledge of God, and preaching and worship are not enough. From Adam to Noah, and from Noah to Abraham, men had these. Yet the world became heathenized in each dispensation. God's wisdom was to plant his truth in the children of each generation, binding parents to do this,—affixing the seal to their solemn oath, by the covenant token. And thus, *true doctrine and true religion are preserved by those who adhere to the Abrahamic covenant!* It is the "balance wheel" of the world! The saving knowledge of God cannot be lost so long as parents "keep" this cove-

nant. It is behind the working of every truth of God this day, as its energy and its protection. Take it away, and the Church will forget what the witnessing for God is! This is God's wisdom! It is truth! It is history! As a significant fact, we read (Rom. i. 31.) that one of the sins of those whom God "gave over to a reprobate mind," was *covenant-breaking!* And to give up this covenant would be to give up the only means that has proved the safeguard of his truth in the world. Without it, men would again "change the truth of God into a lie." By nature, they do not like to retain the knowledge of God, better than those of whom Paul writes in Romans. The doctrines once preached in circumcision, and now in infant baptism, are most important witness in the scheme of redemption. Hush this testimony, and man will soon forget that he is born a sinner and needs a Saviour and Sanctifier! Then, once more, the history noted in Rom. i. 22-32, will repeat itself. Every generation will be marked by some departure from God, until the whole world becomes "reprobate!"

Whether the truth be palatable or not to the despisers of this covenant, it is yet true, that *they owe their existence to this covenant, and are dependent upon it for such purity of doctrine as may characterize them.*

Abolish the covenant they would, had they only the ability. But thank God, for our own hope and for theirs, they cannot! And it is meet, that for all who strike a blow to hurt this covenant the prayer be offered,—“Father forgive them; they know not what they do?” So, then, let faith continue to give the token in baptism to “unconscious babes,” and so recognize its obligations to keep in training a people for God. It is an act done towards God! So we accept our vows of duty. So we set our accepting seal to God’s offer, “I will be a God to thy seed after thee.” Those who would put this aside, break off, so far as they can, the bonds from parents, and turn the children away from religious training. It is sad, sad work that they would make. But the God of Abraham lives to prevent it!

CHAPTER VI.

No New Church.

OUR duties and Abraham's are one in nature, because we are of the same Church, and under the same covenant law. This is in no way changed by the fact that he was of the Old, while we are of the New Dispensation. The Abrahamic covenant certainly existed to the time of Christ's coming. And to this time, God had in the world those whom his Word called "his people." Moses said, in Exod. xxxiii. 13, "This is thy people." God calls them in Lev. xxvi. 12, "My people." See also how these terms run through the whole of the Old Testament. God's visible Church was thus recognized by the inspired writers.

Did Christ destroy it, and found a new Church? The word of God teaches that he did not! The error of "distinctive views" is in assuming that a *change of Dispensation* necessitates a *change of law and constitution*. But a *dispensation* only

represents to us the administration of Church matters during a certain time. Surely the Great Head of the Church can change a dispensation without overthrowing and rebuilding Churches! But what says the Word of God? By this only we stand. In Rom. xv. 8, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." What! Jesus, the Head of the *Gospel Church*, "a minister of the circumcision"? He was circumcised "the eighth day," according to the covenant which he was to confirm. (Luke ii. 21.) (To "follow the example of Jesus," is to *receive the covenant-token in infancy!*) And how could he "confirm the promises made to the fathers," if he destroyed the Church in which they received those promises, and to which they belonged? His work was not destruction, but "*reformation.*" (Heb. ix. 10.)

This truth is abundantly taught and illustrated—

1. In Matt. xxi. he represents the kingdom of God as a "vineyard." It was not *destroyed*. It

was only taken from Jews and given to Gentiles. The occupants were changed, not the vineyard.

Christ says this!

2. In John. x. the Church is the “*one fold*.” Christ is the “one Shepherd,” standing in the Jewish Church, “a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God.” He says that he must bring in other sheep, not then of that fold. But he makes *no new fold*. It is one.

3. In Rom. xi. we read of the “olive tree.” The tree is not up-rooted. But Jewish branches are broken off, and Gentile branches grafted in. An inspired apostle says so! The Gentiles were brought into the already living and growing Church.

4. In Rom. xv. Gentiles are exhorted to worship God “with his people.” Indeed, the whole New Testament abounds with this doctrine.

5. In 1 Cor. x. 1-4, “One Rock”—Christ—refreshed the saints of both dispensations alike.

6. Eph. ii. says that God's people are one under both dispensations, and that Christ has only “broken down the middle wall of partition.”

And so the Gentiles entered "the fellowship of the saints, and the household of God." And Neh. ix. 20, joins Paul in saying that "one Spirit" presides over both Jews and Gentiles.

Now these are but a few out of many illustrations from God's Word. If Christ and his apostles understood the doctrine, this point ought to pass beyond discussion. It is expressly proved by their words. God's will was, as Paul expresses it in Eph. iii. 6, not for a new Church, but "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body" in "the commonwealth of Israel" (ii. 12) "and partakers of his (God's) promise in Christ by the Gospel.

It is passing strange that any one, with an open Bible, can believe that Christ made a new Church. Yet the assertion is made over and over again. But as well might a man deny his own body, because of the reformations constantly taking place in it, as to assert that the Church was destroyed by Christ's reformations. The old Church only grew young again—renewed its strength in "the time of reformation" (Heb. ix. 10) under the hand

of Christ. Its identity was not destroyed in the least, as all parts of God's Word assure us.

Does a change of governors or presidents change the laws and constitution of state or country, so that we have a new state or country with every change in the administration? Certainly not.

Then why imagine that the old Dispensation Church cannot be unchanged, or why suppose that we now have a new Church, only because the visible administration is changed? This is actually all that was done. Take another illustration from the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter third. Christ is the builder of the house (verse 3) in which Moses, for a time, ruled as the servant of Christ. But the *administration* was changed from Moses to Christ, who ruled "as a Son over his own house." (Verse 6.) Did that change destroy the house and build a new one? No. Then Paul's teaching in Eph. ii. 18-22 becomes decisive of this matter. Chapter and verse we have given, and challenge the most studious examination of every point. There is not a clearer doctrine



in God's Word than this. Then why should any deny it? Why?

1. Because of ignorance, prejudice, refusal to study the Scriptures, or sincere, but mistaken interpretation of God's Word.

2. Because it is hard to admit a doctrine which would destroy all of one's "distinctive views."

Isaiah (xl. 11) in prophesying of the kingdom of Christ, said that he would "feed his flock like a shepherd," and "gather the lambs with his arm." The fulfilment of this prophecy is seen only among those who hold the doctrine of the Abrahamic covenant as being still in force. This doctrine follows, as a necessary consequence, if the Abrahamic Church is perpetuated as the Gospel Church.

CHAPTER VII.

Gentiles Inherit the Covenant.

WE have seen that the covenant was made, and in it we found the origin of the visible Church. The first church-members were the believing parent, his infant sons, and all males of his household. To these only the token extended. No others in all the world were selected of God so far as the record speaks. There is no evidence that any, except Abraham, had faith, yet there were other members and *infants* among them.

Now as God made this covenant, none but God can rightfully repeal it. *And as God's Word does not anywhere show or hint its repeal*, of course, all are in error who assert that it is repealed. To assert its repeal is to contradict the Scriptures. If the covenant is not repealed, it follows that the constitution of the visible Church is not changed. If anything in all the history of the Jews could have been fixed upon as potent

enough to destroy the covenant, it would have been the Mosaic law-giving. But Paul, in Gal. iii. 17, says positively that the law did not affect it at all. Neither covenant nor promise was touched by the law! This is a "Thus saith the Lord," and should suffice. But let us examine this chapter a little :

1. In verse 7, "Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."

2. In verse 8, we are told that God's words to Abraham—"In thee shall all nations be blessed,"—was "the Gospel" preached to him. It was God's preparation to reach the heathen, and carry out his purpose to justify them. The covenant was the means of effecting God's purpose.

3. Verse 9 says, "They which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

4. The *law* gives no blessing to any for their faith. (See verse 10-12.)

5. The purpose of Christ's coming and work was "that the blessing of Abraham might come

on the Gentiles" through him, and "the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Verses 13, 14.)

6. Nothing whatever was added to or taken from the covenant. (Verses 15-17. Rom. xv. 8.)

7. Verse 16. Christ was pre-eminently "the seed of Abraham." (See verse 29.)

8. Verses 18-25. The law was not the "development" of the Abrahamic covenant, but was *extra*. It was "*added*" for a time and purpose. The Church was *schooled* under it from its giving until Christ came.

9. Christ, under the new Dispensation, is the only head of the spiritual body. (Verses 26, 27.)

10. Verse 28. All distinctions of sex and condition or nationality are abolished under Christ.

11. Though (verse 16) Christ was pre-eminently the seed of Abraham, yet, verse 29, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye (also) Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Here we might safely rest the case. But besides this, we have Rom. iv. and many other Scriptures. The argument amounts to a demonstration! It is God who gives it. Shall we be-

lieve any teachings which oppose or deny it? Is man's "distinctive view" greater than God's Word? *If these teachings of Scripture mean what they say*, we, with our children, stand under the same covenant which God gave to Abraham. Then, as with Abraham, each family having a believing head is set apart for God. God marks it for himself. It is for the preservation of God's truth. The parent is commanded, as truly as Abraham was, to give the covenant token to his infants, in this way confessing God's claim. Thus it is in each generation, that there may always be a people in training for God's service.

Further: the promise that Abraham should be a "father of many nations" *could not have been fulfilled, had not the covenant been intended for and extended to the Gentiles after Christ's coming!* For not until after his coming were Gentiles, or any nations but the Jewish, brought into the Church privileges or promises.

Therefore the argument of Heb. xi. 39, 40 is, that the Old Testament saints could not be perfect in their inheritance of the promises without

the Gentiles. That the Scriptures, as quoted, refer to this covenant of circumcision is clear. For what other covenant, admitting of such references did God ever make? None. Therefore the argument is a complete demonstration of the continuance of His covenant, and of the Gentile participation in its benefits. We recall Paul's argument of Rom. xi., that the breaking off of Jewish branches did not destroy the tree (Church), but that Gentile branches were grafted into that same tree. So its symmetry was preserved. In all this breaking off and grafting in there was but one stock and root. It is plain that the grafting in of Gentiles makes them not a new tree, but *a part of the old tree* upon which the Jewish branches grew. Therefore, says Paul (verse 17), the new branches *were grafted in among those* already upon the tree, and partook "of the root and fatness of the olive tree." This is clear enough, surely. What more positive "Thus saith the Lord" could be given? God gave the covenant. He never repealed or changed it. He says that all who are Christ's, are also Abraham's

seed and heirs. Are we Christ's? Then we are the seed and heirs of Abraham. The generations of the "seed" did not end in Christ any more than in Isaac or Jacob. Yet we have seen and heard the contrary asserted, because of Gal. iii. 16, "And to thy seed, which is Christ." But verse 29 shows the "seed" perpetuated through Christ. "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed." There is no "blood relation" between us and Abraham. How, then, is our connection with him formed? The 29th verse says, "through Christ." He was, as verse 16 says, the seed of Abraham, and we are the seed of Christ. Does not this Scripture positively and expressly say so? *It is a "Thus saith the Lord."* And let him who wants to satisfy himself further on this point notice Matt. i. 1: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." Then follows the "genealogical table." It shows the family line of descent from Abraham to the child Jesus. Now let us think a little. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of Abraham." The covenant was

made with Abraham, and Isaac, his son, inherited it. For "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." God said so in Gen. xxi. 12. It is repeated in Rom. ix. 7, and Heb. xi. 18. And in Gal. iv. 28, the apostle says to *Gentiles*, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." It is clear enough that Isaac inherited the covenant. After him his son, Jacob, inherited it. Then Jacob's son, Judah; then Judah's son, Phares; and so on to Jesus Christ, *who inherited this covenant as truly as Isaac* did. (Gal. iii. 16.) Then verse 29 tells us plainly, that we inherit it through Christ, as Isaac inherited it from Abraham. This is the direct connection. Thus we are children of that covenant as truly as Isaac was. Its promise, benefits and duties are as truly ours.

But some object, that this covenant was repealed, and declared to be abolished in Heb. viii.

Surely he must be a careless reader who can believe it because of anything there said. The 9th verse is a clear refutation of the assertion.

It shows that the reference was, as God says, "to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead *them out of the land of Egypt.*" This, then, was not the Abrahamic covenant, and there is no reference to it in this chapter.

The "first covenant" mentioned in viii. 7 is described in the 9th chapter as the *law-covenant*, having Moses as its minister.

"The "new covenant" of viii. 8 is referred to in ix. 15, having Christ as its Mediator.

Thus the contrast is between *law* and *grace*. The "first covenant" of verse 7 was the law. It was made "old" (verse 13) by the giving of a "new covenant," namely, the covenant of grace—or the Gospel.

This chapter is the only place in the Bible where the opposers of our doctrine even pretend to find a repeal of the Abrahamic covenant. But the chapter itself proves them to be mistaken.

Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-03-08 22:27 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.3901505712212
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

CHAPTER VIII.

The Token.

GOD said of circumcision: "It shall be a token of the covenant between me and you." *He never calls it a "national mark."* It is "a token of the covenant," making Abraham "a father of many nations." This covenant was spiritual, and so was its token. Such is the teaching of the sacred writers, as already shown. But the *form* of token was not perpetual.

Jesus Christ, who had all power in heaven and earth, changed the *form* from circumcision to baptism (Matt. xxviii.), and enlarged its application to all, without respect to persons. (See Gal. iii. 28.) In the time of reformation he commanded baptism. This sufficed.

A careful examination of the Scriptures leads to the following conclusions, as to the significance of the token:

1. Applied to an adult, already exercising or professing faith (as Abraham), it was "the seal of

the righteousness of the faith which he had.” (Rom. iv. 11.)

2. Applied to a heathen, or to one not before in covenant with God, it is the initiatory rite marking his entrance into such relationship. (Gen. xvii. 12, 13; Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark, xvi. 16; Acts, xvi. 15-33, etc.)

3. Applied to one born within the covenant, it is the recognition of his standing before God, and of his need of God's redemption. The token is his birthright, and declares his obligation to be the Lord's. (Gen. xvii. 1-7, 13, 14; Luke, i. 59; Rom. ix. 8, etc.)

4. The Gospel preached by this token is, that by nature we are sinners,—“children of wrath,”—and need the Saviour; that we are unclean and depraved, and need the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, with all his cleansing work. *The outward token preaches the necessity of the inward grace.*

As we have seen, the token in its first form was applied to the believer, Abraham, then to his infant sons, etc. It is now applied by com-

mand of Christ, in the form of baptism. The controversy on this point would never have arisen, but for this change in the *form* of the token. Had Christ said, in Matt. xxviii. 19, "*circumcise* all nations," instead of saying, "baptize them," no one would, to this day, have dreamed of withholding the token from Gentile infants, which had always been given to Jewish infants. The whole controversy is because of a *mere change of form*.

The formation of the visible Church has been noted. The law for *adult* admission now is the law by which Abraham was circumcised. When an uncovenanted adult professes faith, he is to enter into his public relations to God by receiving the now existing token—baptism.

We proceed upon the fact of a *credible profession of faith* in this adult. God selected a man of faith; but he has left us to act only upon a credible profession. We can go no deeper, where the life does not contradict the profession.

Every adult to whom the Gospel comes *for the first time*,—or the adult not already a member of

God's visible Church,—is to be accepted and entered, as of old, upon personal profession of faith. This was the way in which the apostles proceeded in the early Church among the Gentiles *who were newly admitted*. (Acts, chapters viii., x. and xvi.) And this is now the law for such adults.

But the law demands that this adult's next act (if the head of a family) shall be the *giving of the same token to his infant seed*. When the parent professes the faith, the child is entitled to a place in the visible Church with him. It is no objection worthy of note that "circumcision was given only to males." The ignorance displayed in such a cavil is simply amazing. The *man*, under the Old Dispensation, represented the family. But the patriarchal times are gone. Christ now stands as the only Priest and Head of his people. They are all one in him. (See Gal. iii. 28.)

The token goes to all. And, as of old, circumcision of the flesh must be followed by circumcision of the heart. (Deut. x. 16; xxx. 6.) So, now, baptism must be followed or accom-

panied by the inward cleansing; else it is of no profit. (Rom. ii. 28, 29; Gal. v. 6; vi. 15; Col. ii. 11.)

Is it asked, "why don't you baptize your *servants?* and why baptize any but males?" A proper attention to the Scriptures would have prevented the question. "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither *bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one* in Christ Jesus." (See Gal. iii. 28, 29.) Therefore we baptize *all*—both male and female.

As to servants, if in slavery, it would be the Master's *duty* to baptize them.

But now each one, "without regard to race, color, previous condition," etc., etc., is a free man,—his own master, head of his own family,—and must act for himself and his own "seed." "Former things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

The New Testament shows us the *extension* of *privilege*, as in Gal. iii. 28, above quoted. But there is nowhere any change of the covenant. The infants of God's people are now, under this.

privilege, entitled to at least as many rights as the infants of the Old Dispensation. If not, it is certainly most strange that God should encourage us to believe so!

CHAPTER IX.

Change of Token.

NO one will venture to question Christ's authority to change the covenant-token from circumcision to baptism. He had "all power." But it is often contended that Christ commanded baptism for adult believers.

We ask in vain, however, for any such command in the Word of God. It is not there. For this reason it cannot be produced. The main reliance for those who contend for such limitation of the rite is in the words, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Note:—

1. These words are a *statement*, not a command.

2. They were not intended to apply to those who were already in covenant with God, but to the new-comers, *after the Church was extended to the uncovenanted Gentiles*—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark, xvi. 15.)

3. The words do not forbid, that after the adult believer had been baptized, he should extend the token to his infants, according to the covenant.

4. The commission, (recorded in full only in Matt. xxviii.) does not mention faith at all, as the pre-requisite for baptism.

5. The words in Mark, xvi. 16, make faith essential to *salvation*, not to baptism.

6. The baptized infant, professing faith at years of accountability, fulfils the whole demand.

7. If Christ did not repeal the covenant law by which infants are baptized, it remains in force. Then this passage (Mark xvi. 16) must have an interpretation consistent with it. These words do not say that *every person baptized must be a believer*. As before shown, to say who is, and who is not a believer, is to us an impossibility. Therefore we could baptize no one. Christ was simply giving directions to his disciples *for their work among heathen nations*. These disciples being Jews, and accustomed to the working of the covenant-law under the old token, would naturally apply the same principles to the new; and as Christ

did not repeal that law, neither would they dare to do so. And it is a remarkable fact, *the New Testament does not record the baptism of a single adult whose parents were believers during his infancy!* Every adult who was baptized was a new-comer to the Church! Here we see a *new class* about to be introduced into the Church—Gentiles—heathen. But their reception could not alter the constitution which admitted infants. The change in the *form* of token did not lessen the privileges of the “seed.” Christ did not send his disciples with this commission to Jews, but to Gentiles, “Go ye therefore and teach (disciple) all nations,” (Matt. xxviii.) “Go ye into all the world,” (Mark, xvi. 15.) “Among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem,” (Luke, xxiv. 47.) Yea, “at Jerusalem,” because, on the day of beginning, there were at Jerusalem “devout men out of every nation under heaven.” (Acts, ii. 5-11.) Were they all Jews? Cornelius (Acts, x. 2) was “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house.” Yet he needed the Gospel. He was a Gentile, and was therefore baptized. Peter’s

sermon was based upon the very words of the covenant, "The promise is unto you and to your children." Did he not know and mean what he said? He and his brethren were not "drunk with new wine." (Acts, ii. 13-15.) This is the first teaching as to the application of the new token after the ascension of Christ. And on the day of Pentecost, this new token was administered for the first time; for John the Baptist administered only a ceremonial purification in view of Christ's coming—to prepare his way. It was not recognized by Paul as Christian baptism. Compare John, iii. 25, and Acts, xix. 1-5.

This use of the new token could not change the Church law. If we change the *form* of our State seal, this does not change the constitution and laws of the State, nor the standing of parents and children as adult and minor citizens of the commonwealth. This for illustration.

But it is asked: "Why were circumcised Jews baptized on the day of Pentecost?" Answer: They were "stones" rejected and cast out of the foundation, but were afterwards redressed and

used. *Their circumcision had become uncircumcision.* Paul taught that this could be. (See Rom. ii. 25.) They were treated as people who had never been in God's covenant. Therefore, when he received them, their reception had to be under the changed form of seal—the change having been made during the time of their sin and alienation.

Crispus (Acts, xviii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 14) is also spoken of in this connection. But was he circumcised? There is no record of it. We can only *presume* he was. There may have been exceptional cases, where both rites were received by the same person, for reasons unknown to us. *But this was not the rule.*

If, again, it is objected that Saul of Tarsus was both circumcised and baptized, we reply: his case is precisely like that of other crucifiers of Christ just noted. His circumcision had become uncircumcision by reason of his fatal rebellion against Christ. He shows his approval and acceptance of the persecution and crucifixion of Jesus Christ by desiring the high priest to give

him "letters" (Acts, ix. 1, 2), empowering him to pursue unto death "the disciples of the Lord." And when Jesus met him on the way to Damascus, he asked "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.*"

Turning to 1 Tim. i. 13, we see that Paul speaks of himself in these words: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." In verse 15, he declares himself the *chief of sinners*, in memory of his persecuting days.

Is it strange, then, that a special demand for allegiance to Jesus should be made upon him? *He had utterly denied and rejected the claims of Jesus Christ*—taken his place deliberately among his crucifiers. Therefore it was only reasonable to treat his as an exceptional case, and require that he should submit to baptism, in addition to the circumcision which he already had.

But we repeat, this was not the general rule. Baptism was not required in such cases as Simeon, Nathanael and Zaccheus, noted in the Gospel records; Stephen, "they of the circumcision;" and Apollos, noted in Acts; and Aris-

tarchus, Marcus and Justus, noted in Col. iv. 10, 11.

We read that "they of the circumcision" still contended for circumcision. *Yet they were recognized as members and workers in the Gospel Church.* If they were baptized, they would not have continued their contention for circumcision. Had baptism been necessary for them, and they had refused to receive it, they would not have been recognized as members of the Gospel Church.

It is a just conclusion, that if the command of Christ required the baptism of the many thousands of circumcised believers, some record would have made the matter plain. But there is not one to show it. Yet, if it was so, then, as the compelling of rebels to take again the oath of allegiance to a king does not change the common laws of his kingdom, neither would baptizing the circumcised rebels against Christ at all change the law of his Church, or show that baptism did not succeed to and supplant circumcision.

CHAPTER X.

Exit Circumcision.

TH**ERE** is no reason whatever against the idea that baptism is now the covenant token in the stead of circumcision. Such is the fact. Circumcision has utterly disappeared from the Christian Church. Though Jews still practice it, yet if a Jew joins the Christian Church, he will cease from it forever. And it is right that such a Jew should *now* be baptized; for his circumcision is out of date, the ceremony having long since been abolished by the incoming of baptism. It now has no significance, unless those who still hold to it have attached a meaning for themselves, and not of God.

But the *covenant* still remains in force. Nothing has ever been substituted for this. And if the new token, baptism, is not for infants of God's people, as the old token was, Peter did not deal truly with his hearers on the day of Pentecost; for in that first sermon he urges the *continuance*

of the promise, as the reason for baptism. "Be baptized, . . . for, (or because) the promise is unto you and to your children." It is the covenant expression. (Gen. xvii. 7.) How would a Jew understand it? He would certainly think that the old law about infant Church relations was to be continued. And if this were not the case, Peter would certainly have told his hearers so. That baptism and circumcision are of one meaning, is evident in the fact that in Rom. vi. and Col. ii., the spiritual circumcision and spiritual baptism answer perfectly to each other. The believer's sanctification is declared by both alike. Thus they correspond with each other. There was no antagonism preventing the use of either rite in the sense of the other. But when Christ commanded baptism, this became law to the Church, and circumcision must give place. We might naturally expect some clash and controversy in the progress of the change. And it is well known that Jewish teachers gave the apostles much trouble by insisting that the old rite should be continued among the Gentiles. They in-

sisted that Gentile converts should be circumcised. (Acts, xv. 1-5, 24; xi. 2; Gal. vi. 12, etc.) *This shows that the Jews regarded circumcision as a spiritual rite, and the initiatory rite of the Church.* Else, why did they want *converts* circumcised? In Col. ii. 11, we see Paul telling Gentile Christians, "Ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands;" and he shows them (verse 12) that the spiritual baptism which made them one with Christ in his atoning work was the true *Christian* circumcision. They needed such explanations. For the Jew boasted that he had the best rite—God-given and time-honored. Therefore the apostle shows these Gentile Christians that God's real demand was for "circumcision of the heart." He blends spiritual circumcision and baptism into one in the work of Christ. Is this meaningless? At the cross of Christ the outward signs meet in perfect agreement. One led the covenanted hosts up the further side of Calvary from the Old Dispensation. The other leads us of the New Dispensation up the nearer side. And meeting upon that one summit, all of

God's covenanted hosts bow before the same cross, and worship the one Saviour. The outward forms of the token were like Christ and his great forerunner. As one increased, the other decreased. As baptism was more practised, circumcision gradually disappeared. This was as Christ intended. He did not (let it be noticed) command any *ignoring of circumcision* nor warfare upon it. But he simply gave command to baptize, and as this command was obeyed, in process of time, the new token would be adjusted to its place. As baptism took up the *faith* of God's people, so it also took up their infants, before either had entirely fallen from the care of circumcision. Christ ordered it just in that way.

In Acts xv. we read of certain adherents of Moses, who went to Antioch to urge circumcision upon the Gentile converts. They taught that circumcision was connected with salvation: "Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved." They held this as the law of the Old Testament Church. Here was a part of the controversy about the two rites, as to which should prevail.

Paul and Barnabas opposed the teaching, for they had been commanded to baptize. Now notice how the question was treated.

1. A great discussion arose about the matter. But why not settle it at once, by saying "circumcision was never a *Church* rite!" *This could not be said!* Paul and Barnabas knew it could not; for that rite had prevailed in the Church. All they could do was to argue that it ought not to *continue*, because Christ had substituted baptism for the Gentiles.

2. Being unable to settle the matter satisfactorily, it was agreed to refer the decision to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. The difficulty was treated with respect.

3. When laid before the Church court at Jerusalem, it was fairly discussed, not as a *heterodox* matter, but as one of reasonable inquiry.

4. "Pharisees which believed," but evidently were not baptized, took part in the discussion, and insisted upon the old Church customs. (verse 5.)

5. The apostles took opposite ground. And

in the discussion, Peter said that God had put no difference between Jews and Gentiles, in matters of faith. (verse 9.)

And James argued that the incoming of the Gentiles was, according to prophecy, not the building of a new Church, but *building "again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down,"* and *building "again the ruins thereof."* The identity of the Church among Jews and Gentiles was thus recognized. James showed (verse 18) that the bringing in of Gentiles was not the result of any change of mind on God's part. He intended it when he ordained circumcision.

6. The final decision (verses 20, 24, 28 and 29) was, that the apostles had not commanded Gentiles to be circumcised; but that now they should abstain from what God had forbidden, and not in any way needlessly offend the Jews. This was the sense of the reply, and it was satisfactory. The whole proceeding shows firmness as to the Gentile interest, but also consideration for the prejudices of those still holding to circumcision. There is no war against circumcision.

Again: in Acts, xxi. 21, this controversy appears once more. Paul is accused of teaching Jews living among Gentiles not to circumcise their children, nor walk after the customs. The charge no doubt arose because Paul still maintained the position he had taken at Antioch, (Acts xv.,) namely: that Jewish forms should not be imposed upon Gentiles. We can well believe that he enforced the truth upon Jews, only as they were able to bear it, after the example of Christ. (John, xvi. 12; 1 Cor. ix. 20.) On this, note—

(1) The many thousands of Jews “which believed” (verse 20) were greatly excited at the report.

(2.) James and the elders thought it right to make some concessions to their prejudices.

(3.) They advised Paul to quiet them as follows: he was to join himself to four men in the Church at Jerusalem, who still observed the ceremonial law, conform to their customs with them, and bear the expenses (of all.) This would indicate a pious attachment to the “customs,” and so remove Jewish hostility. (verse 24.) This Paul

always did, if, by that means, he could win favor to the Gospel. (1 Cor. ix. 20.)

(4.) Lest Paul should object that this would set a wrong example to the Gentiles, James and the elders remind him (verse 25) of what had been written to them (Acts, xv.) as their rule of duty.

All this shows that the early Church, while knowing that circumcision must cease, did not regard it otherwise than as the former rite of the Church—the predecessor of baptism. *They did not insist upon baptism for believing Jews*, but they did insist that circumcision should not be imposed upon the Gentile converts. Thus, as the Church and baptism spread among “all nations,” the new token would gradually displace the old. Had Christ *expressly forbidden* circumcision, this would have driven off the Jews entirely, and created a far worse conflict than that which did arise. So he chose simply to let circumcision *wear out* by disuse, and baptism increase by the command for it

But notice, that in all the controversy, there is

never any hint that the *covenant* was changed, or that the children of God's people were no longer to receive its token. The charge against Paul was only that he taught the Jews no longer to *circumcise* their children. If, as some say, Christ and his apostles abolished the *covenant*, is it not passing strange that in all the Bible,—among all records of Jewish murmurs, complaints and persecutions,—we never see even a hint of such a thing?

They did contend earnestly for the old token, as we have seen. Would they not much more contend for the covenant itself? In this is most decided proof that, though Christ changed the *token*, he did not interfere with the covenant, nor cast out the children.

These are the facts, with the "Thus saith the Lord" for them. No denials, hostility or opposition can change them.

CHAPTER XI.

The Working of the Covenant.

THAT the covenant is still in force, and is the inheritance of the Gentiles, we have shown. We have also shown that, in the continuance of the covenant, the new token belongs, and must be given, to God's people and their infants; and that the privileges are extended in Christ's administration to all, without respect to persons. And now we repeat, because it must be kept in mind, that *the change of token did not change, or involve a change, in the covenant.* Therefore the professed Christian must extend its new token to his infant seed. This is the law. It was obeyed in the circumcision of infants, from Abraham's day to Christ's coming.

Let us see what results follow its proper observance. After a believing adult, or one professing faith, has taken his place under the covenant, and affixed the token to his infants, there ought never again to be a case, in his genera-

tions, of *an adult* receiving the token. For example :

Abraham circumcised his household according to God's covenant requirement. In turn, Isaac would circumcise his household, Jacob his, and so through all generations. The only cases of *adult* circumcision would thus be when a new comer joined God's people.

The same law should work in baptizing. Then infant baptism would be prominent, and adult baptism the exception to the rule. We hear the din of objections made to this doctrine. In it all we only see that man does not like God's ways. The pre-eminence given to adult baptism is not Scriptural. In proportion as it prevails, so is the Church marked as preferring human wisdom to Divine. The cry for none but "believer's baptism" never started with God, and is not in accord or sympathy with his word.

As we said, where there is no covenant standing, the adult must be baptized. And this is the only rule ever taught in the word of God, for adult baptism. This is the meaning of all that Christ said about baptizing believers. Isaiah

lived in the Church of God under the Old Dispensation. Looking forward to the New Dispensation, when God's everlasting Word would rule the nations, he pictured the Church to us as she obeyed among "all nations" God's call (Isa. xlix. 22): "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders." Or take the prophecy of what God would do after the mission of John the Baptist. (Isa. xl. 3-11.) "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms." God *always* recognized "the lambs" as belonging to his flock, as truly as the grown sheep! Thus we see that, when God called the Gentiles, they were to come *bringing their infants with them*. Therefore Peter spoke God's will, when he preached: "The promise is unto you and to your children."

Now, where and how do we see Isaiah's words fulfilled? Where is the Scriptural Church? We see it when parents come to God, and bring their infants with them, that all together may stand

before God as his people. Where this is the practice of the Church, and she is in other points conformed to God's Word, *there only is the Church of the Bible!* The prophet Ezra (viii. 21) believed in the duty of seeking of God "a right way" for "our little ones." And it was not of old esteemed too great a thing for "the little ones" to stand with their parents and all the congregation of Israel, to *enter into covenant*" with the Lord. (Deut. xxix. 10-12.) Such is also the administration of Jesus Christ to his Church. His dispensation *enlarges* our privileges. This is confessed by all. But how strange to be told that *enlarging* privileges means not having as many as formerly! This is the view of opposers of the covenant. Why did the Great Head of the Church single out the "little ones" again and again for special notice and blessing? In every form and way the truth is impressed, that the God who *opened* Church existence by saying, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee," does not continue and perfect his Church by saying, "I will be a God unto thee, but *not* to thy seed after thee." Nay; "the gifts and call-

ing of God are without repentance." Against all doubtings the Word speaks, saying: "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of the promise." (Gal. iv. 28.)

In this fourth chapter of Galatians, Paul speaks of two covenants—the Abrahamic and the covenant of Sinai. And here he claims for Gentiles, not a place in the Sinai covenant, *but equality with Isaac*, the son of Abraham, in the line of promise—the line of the covenant of circumcision. See also his third chapter of Galatians, and his fourth chapter of Romans. He would and could not speak thus if the Abrahamic covenant were not working for the benefit of the Gentiles. And we may rest assured that where parents now accept and abide in this doctrine, "God, even our God, shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." To this result the working of the covenant has thus far tended most gloriously. And so it will be, by the faithfulness of God's people, until Jesus Christ shall reign King of nations, thus confirming the promise in which "the fathers" hoped.

CHAPTER XII.

The Seed.

SOME of the most marked cases of wrong interpretation and reading of the Scriptures are seen in the various answers to the question, "Who are the seed of Abraham?" It is said:

1. "The covenant of circumcision was only designed to hold the seed of Abraham together, to secure the birth of Messiah in this line." Now there is one verse which seems to support this idea. In Gal. iii. 16, we read, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

Truly, if the covenant had no other purpose than to secure the birth of Christ, this verse would suffice to show that, and as soon as he was born, the covenant would end. But error is often begotten *by the use of only one verse* of Scripture, to the exclusion of all else that may be taught. Such is the case here. This verse is only *one*

part of the Apostle's teaching. In verse 14, he says, "the blessing of Abraham" comes on the Gentiles "through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Now the promise of the covenant was recorded by inspiration of the Spirit. Its words, "I will be a God unto thee," are God's promise to give his Spirit to his covenanted people. Christ's work purchased the gift of the Spirit. Through him we have the Spirit, and our relationship to Abraham also. Thus verse 7, "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham;" and verse 9, "So then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Verse 13, Christ was made a curse for Abraham and for all his believing seed. Verse 14, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." This is our connection with Abraham. We are "joint heirs with Christ" in the covenant. To secure this connection, he "was made like unto his brethren." (Heb. ii. 17.)

"The covenant was confirmed before of God in Christ," and he confirms it to us, by purchasing

our place in it. Thus we also become Abraham's seed. Christ is not the only "seed." Therefore the Apostle adds in verse 29, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." And this shows that the covenant was not given only to secure the birth of Christ in the chosen line of descent.

2. It is said, "The promises were only in regard to our obtaining salvation through Christ, the "seed." We answer:

(1.) The fathers had two promises: one, about the coming of Christ; the other, in the words, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Both of these Christ has confirmed to us.

(2.) There is no sense in verse 29, if the promises refer only to our eternal life through Christ. If only our eternal life in him is referred to, why tell us that we are *Abraham's* seed and heirs?

Is Abraham the *joint author* of our faith and salvation? Did he assist Christ in the atonement? Certainly not. Of what use is he, then, to us? In verse 26, we are called "children of

God." But in verse 7, we are called "children of Abraham." Have we two fathers, then? Yes. God is the father of our salvation, and Abraham is our father in the covenant of the visible Church.

But notice, in Rom. xv. 8, the word "promise" appears in the *plural*, referring to the two promises already noted; while in Gal. iii. 29, *only one promise* is spoken of,—the promise of Abraham's seed—namely, *the people of Christ, after Christ had come*. It is the promise of the covenant of circumcision, confirmed through Christ to Gentiles. It was given to Abraham, "who is the father of us all, before him whom he believed, even God." (Rom. iv. 16, 17.) That promise was given to him for Isaac, and for us, who, "as Isaac was, are children of the promise." The word "seed," therefore, as applied to us, means as much for us as for Isaac.

3. It is said, "But the promise is only the promise of the Spirit through faith." (verse 14.) Then, why connect us with Abraham for this? He had no part in obtaining the Spirit for us.

He does not bestow the Holy Spirit. Nay, he, like us, needed this Spirit to make God's promise to him and his seed effectual. First, we need the Holy Spirit to work and keep faith in our own hearts; then, to save our infants also. In giving them the covenant-token, we confess their need of regeneration; and we bespeak the ministry of the Holy Spirit for them, according to the promise, "I will be a God to thy seed after thee." When we take hold upon this promise, it is by the exercise of faith. We do not see any signs as yet of its fulfilment in the infant. But our reasoning is not faulty, when speaking thus; God promises *two things*:

(1.) I will be a God to thee. This part we have found true; for he is our God.

(2.) I will be a God to thy seed after thee. As in accepting the first promise we found it worthy of trust, we have boldness to trust the second also, believing that God will be found as true in one as in the other. Therefore do we, in faith, cause the token of the covenant, holding these promises, to be applied to our infants, that for

them, also, we may receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. This is the law for all the seed, whether circumcised or not. If some are disobedient and unfaithful, this does not change the law, nor make the promise of God of none effect to those who abide in the covenant duty.

CHAPTER XIII.

Cavils.

IT may be a temptation, yet it is wrong to render evil for evil to those who, having their “distinctive peculiarities,” often harshly criticise us, because of the faith that is in us. But some remarks are needful in reply to their various objections and cavils.

Cavil 1. “Faith is required for membership, and infants cannot exercise it.”

This point has been already fully treated in former remarks. To man’s ears it may sound strange to speak of infant church members. But it is what God ordained. This is enough. Any one is a church member who is chosen of God to that position. Faith does not make the church or the membership. *God makes both!* “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Cavil 2. “Baptism and church-membership give a right to the Lord’s Supper. Therefore

you ought to give the Lord's Supper to your infants with baptism."

Now, however plausible this may sound, (and it has troubled many,) *it is not at all according to God's Word!* There is not the *shadow*, even, of a "Thus saith the Lord" for it in any part of the Bible. The cavil arises from not knowing the Scriptures, or from not properly noticing their teachings.

(1). The Lord's Supper was instituted before Christ gave his commission for Christian baptism. Matt. xxvi. 26-28 precedes Matt. xxviii. 18-20.

This ordering is Christ's own recognition of the Scriptural law, that the saints of both dispensations are of one communion; that the *tokens* of the two dispensations are not hostile; that the circumcised disciples had as full rights as the baptized would have in Him; and, specially, *that faith is* the principal pre-requisite for the Lord's Supper. As infants cannot exercise faith, of course they have not this chief pre-requisite.

(2.) Christ never connected baptism with the

Lord's Supper. He who does it goes beyond what is written. If baptism pointed to the supper, Christ would have instituted it before He did the supper. But there is no evidence that *all* who partook of the first Lord's Supper had ever been baptized in any way.

(3.) The infant cannot obey the law for coming to the Supper. (1 Cor. xi. 28, 29.) He cannot "examine himself, or discern the Lord's body." But there is nothing in him to hinder his reception of baptism. We have shown that faith is not the only fitness for baptism.

(4.) The Scriptures do not command a man to "examine himself" for baptism; but "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

The adult should be a *baptized member* of the Church. This is Scriptural. But that baptism alone confers the right of partaking of the supper, is *most certainly* not Scriptural!

(5.) The word "member" refers to the *covenant relations*, not to the Christian or *faith*-standing of a person.

(6.) The infant is a non-communing member (or minor) in God's covenanted Church. His standing as such is recognized in baptism. And in baptizing him, we confess the duty of obeying Matt. xxviii. 20, to teach him "to observe all things whatsoever" Christ has commanded us. (The word "teaching" in this verse has the meaning usually given to it. But in verse 19, the word *translated* "teach" is a different one, and means to "disciple or proselyte" from heathen religions.) When the child responds to the "teaching" by a personal faith, he then has the right to the full privileges of membership.

(7.) The infant of Abraham could not believe. Yet he was circumcised. And this law holds as to baptism.

(8.) What right have those of "distinctive views" to fix the meaning of the word "membership" for the Church of God? This they do, and then require all the world to accept their use of the word. But the proper way is to ask God about the matter, and then conform our ideas to His will.

Cavil 3. "But what good is there in baptism for an 'unconscious babe'?" Paul heard a like question in his day: "What profit is there in circumcision?" (Rom. iii. 1) The answer is in iii. 2, 3. It was a cavil against God! But for fear of the same sin, we might also ask, "What good is there in baptism to an adult?" As of old, the token is "a seal of the righteousness of the faith." It is God's seal upon him who receives it. If Abraham's "unconscious babes" were judged of God fit subjects for the rite of circumcision, why are not our infants as fully qualified for baptism? We do not argue that Isaac should not have been circumcised, because he could not exercise faith as Abraham did. Nor should we argue thus as to baptism now. If the parent does his duty before God to the child, the good of baptism will appear in due time.

Cavil 4. "But the baptized child is not always saved." How is that known? Does God never fulfil a promise without showing it to mortal eyes? Is he obliged so to act that nothing shall be done beyond the caviler's observation? Would

it be impossible for him to meet the child of his covenant, even after long wanderings, and in the very gates of death, with his saving mercy? The answer will be found in heaven!

Cavil 5. "The baptized children are no better than others." This is true only in part.

(1). Observation testifies that, as a general rule, the children of the *covenant-keepers* are more carefully and religiously trained than others. The effect is, better children than where there is no such training:

(2). But (Rom. iii. 3), "What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith (*faithfulness*) of God without effect? God forbid. Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar." If some throw away their hope by neglect of covenant duty, this does not affect the hope of those who are faithful. God will not let their "labor of love" be lost on their children. *They will be better for it all*, now and forever! If we do but abide in the promise, God will be found faithful. This is a hope which "maketh not ashamed." But we do well to remember how God said that

he would *not recognize the uncircumcised child*. Will he recognize the unbaptized child? Covenant rejecters may thank God that his mercies are larger and broader in exercise under the New than under the Old Dispensation! Were we now under the strict discipline of the Old Testament, every unbaptized child would be cut off from God's people, and accounted as a covenant breaker! But now the sin of the parent in this matter is not always visited upon the child. Yet, when God proposes a covenant to our acceptance, *if we reject it, we certainly cannot claim its blessings as can those who do accept it!*

In *rejecting* the covenant, our hope rests only in what we *desire* for our children. There is no pledge from God. But in *accepting* it, our hope is safely anchored, not so much to our wishes, as to *what our covenant God has actually promised!*

CHAPTER XIV.

Historical Evidence.

WE rest our case upon the Word of God. Yet it may be interesting to note some external evidences. We are charged by Immersionists with borrowing infant-baptism from Popery. We answer :

1. The charge is utterly untrue. The arguments of the preceding pages have not appealed to Popery—even once.

2. If Popery baptized infants, it did, so far, one Scriptural thing. It also practised the Lord's Supper and marriage. So do we. But is this proof that we borrowed them from Popery? As well may it be said we borrowed these as infant baptism. We take all from God's Word.

3. There can be no reason for the above charge, except in the desire to create a prejudice against infant baptism.

But what of historical evidence?

I. We refer to Tertullian first, because all ad-

mit that he *spoke positively* of infant baptism. A representative Immersionist (Pendleton, "Three Reasons," page 65) says: "If any man alludes to it during the first two hundred years, Tertullian is that man, and Pedo-Baptists concede that he opposed it." Again: "The only fact which concerns me is that Tertullian advised the delay of the baptism of *little children*." Another says: "Tertullian is the first to mention it, and he earnestly opposed it." The date of Tertullian is about A. D. 200. Note—

(1). If he opposed infant baptism, that proves its existence in his days. He could not oppose what did not exist.

(2). He did not speak of it as a new thing, or as not Scriptural. Not once!

(3). Our Immersionist friends *do not tell why he opposed it*, and thus they make an unfair use of him. Do they know that to let out the truth would ruin their witness? That truth is as follows: Tertullian's opposition came from his heretical notions. He believed sins committed after baptism were almost, if not quite, unpar-

donable. *On this ground* alone he based his opposition, advising *all*, not infants merely, to *delay* baptism until the risk of temptations were lessened,—“by reason of age, etc.” His own words are (Vol. I., p. 253): “And so, according to circumstances and disposition, and even age of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable, principally, however, in the case of little children. . . . Why necessary that sponsors be thrust into danger, by dying, or having the infant develop evil disposition, after baptism? Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the remission of sins, etc.?”

Now what are we to think of an attempt to call up such a witness to prove that infant baptism is not right? He mentions, and so proves the practice in his day; but he does not oppose it as *unscriptural*. When Immersionists mention him as opposing infant baptism, *let them tell his reasons for doing so*. But they prefer not to do this, it seems.

II. Origen, born A. D. 185, is said to have been the most learned man of his day, and was a

great traveller. He spent much of his time in Palestine and Syria, where the first churches existed. Would not such a man know church customs? As plainly as words can be written, he says: "Whereas the baptism of the Church is given for the forgiveness of sins, infants also are, by the usage of the Church, baptized; when, if there was nothing in infants that would want forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them. (Homily on Leviticus.) Again: "Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins." (Homily on Luke.) Again: "For this also it was that the Church had, from the apostles, a tradition to give baptism even to infants." (Comments on Romans.) But it is objected, "He was not of sound doctrine." Answer:

(1). "Pretty good from those who quote *unsound Tertullian* so eagerly.

(2). Origen is not "on the stand" to teach doctrine, but as a witness to tell *what he knows, and has seen*. He testifies of infant baptism. But it is objected again: "The translators of Origen's works altered some things; for example,

one of these, Rufinus, altered or left out anything he thought not orthodox. So we don't know that Origen testifies, as reported, about infant baptism." Answer: *The translators did not think that infant baptism was not orthodox, therefore did not leave it out.* Wall (quoted by Immersionists as casting doubt on Origen's testimony) says: "Nor can the testimony of Origen be regarded as an interpolation made by his translators. If there were found in these translators of Origen but one or two places, and those in Rufinus alone, that did speak of infant baptism, there might have been suspicions of their being interpolations. But when there are so many of them, brought in on several occasions, *in translations made by several men who were of several parties, and enemies to one another,* (as St. Hierome and Rufinus were,) and upon no testation, (for it is certain that in their time there was no dispute about infant baptism,) that they should all, without any reason, be forged, is absurd to think." (Vol. I., 119, 120,—"brackets" and all!) And Wall says much more of the same sort. Thus the

Immersionist's quoting or calling a witness fails again.

Once more they object: "Origen says tradition gave infant baptism to the Church. A Papist might rely on that, but not a Protestant." Answer:

(1). He says that once, and all know that "tradition" is not used here in its lower sense, but in the sense of "teaching."

Paul told the Thessalonians: "Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our Epistle." (2 Thes. ii. 15.) Why not say: "This will do for a Papist, but not for a Protestant."

(2). Origen lived very near Apostolic times, and had his assertions been false, all the world would have known it, and contradictions would not have been lacking in so important a Church matter. *Yet there are no contradictions!*

Of Irenæus and Justin Martyr, who wrote earlier, we might speak, but 'tis needless. We call only two more witnesses:

Pelagius, noted in the great controversy on

Original Sin, about three hundred years after the apostles. Augustine, his opponent, held that baptism ought to be given to infants, and charged Pelagius with denying their right to it. Whereupon Pelagius exclaimed: "Men slander me, as if I denied the right of baptism to infants! I never heard of any one, even the most impious heretic, who asserted that infants are not to be baptized." In this, his associate, Celestius, agreed fully. This shows:

(1). That infant baptism had been the practice of the Church, without denial, for the first three hundred years after the apostles. Or:

(2). If any had denied them this rite, their opinions were of so little weight as to attract no attention or care.

The Waldenses of Piedmont always were and still are firm holders of this doctrine. Some deny this, because confounding them with the sect of Petrobrussians, who were heretics, *and denied infant salvation*. The Waldenses, *proper*; always held firmly to infant baptism. Any who wish to see the proof may read

their history, written by one of their descendants, —Perrin. (See specially, Perrin's book I., ch. iv., p. 15; and ch. vi., pp. 30. 31.) This suffices as examples of external evidence. But after all, we care nothing though every writer of the past, outside of the Bible, had spoken against the doctrine. We find our "Thus saith the Lord" for it stretching through all the Bible. And this is our "only rule of faith and manners."

Between this rule, and all others, let the reader now judge and decide!

JAN 30 1919

WHITTET & SHEPPERSON, PRINTERS,
RICHMOND, VA.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



3 9015 05721 2212



Generated at Library of Congress on 2021-03-08 22:27 GMT / <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.390150572212>
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

